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United States aid policy and the war in Vietnam, 1965-1975

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UNITED STATES AID POLICY AND THE WAR IN VIETNAM: 1965-1975

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ABSTRACT

UNITED STATES AID POLICY
AND THE WAR IN VIETNAM: 1965-1975

by Michael N. Bentley

This thesis addresses the topic of United States aid policies toward North and South Vietnam during the principal years of U.S. involvement (1965-1975), and it is considered within the context of the Cold War. The emphasis of this study is an analysis of the failures of the Johnson and Nixon presidential administrations in their attempts to bring North Vietnamese leadership to a mutually acceptable bargaining position, which would allow the existence of the sovereign nation of South Vietnam. Both Johnson and Nixon believed they could find the right "carrot" (aid promises) and "stick" (combat escalation) to bring Hanoi to terms. This paper will show this assumption to have been futile, because of the North Vietnamese commitment to the long-term goal of reunification.

The thesis examines relevant issues which emanated from the Paris Peace Accords, including several controversies, and concludes with a brief summary of where the aid issue stands today, the status of the related POW/MIA situation, and the current prospect of the U.S. and Vietnam reestablishing economic and diplomatic relations.

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INTRODUCTION

United States reconstruction aid policies failed during the principal era of U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War (1965-1973), because the Presidential administrations charged with relevant policy making during these years not only made costly errors themselves, but inherited a view of the Cold War in which defense of South Vietnam was considered vital to containing the spread of global Communism. Consequently, the aid policy decisions of the Johnson and Nixon administrations can be better understood in light of decisions made by Presidents Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower and Kennedy.

With that context established, the remainder of this study will examine the failure of the "carrot-and-stick" strategy and methodology employed by both the Johnson and Nixon administrations to induce North Vietnam to end its efforts to unify Vietnam under Communist control. The study will conclude by presenting several of the aid-related controversies which emerged from the 1973 Paris Peace Agreement, as well as a brief overview of what has happened to the aid issue since 1975.

CHAPTER ONE

The Cold War (1945-1989) developed as a confrontation between Communist and non-Communist nations following World War II. Although the Allies included the Soviet Union in their international coalition to defeat the Axis powers during World War II, this was only a temporary arrangement. Long-term hostilities and suspicions concerning the Soviet Union had to be set aside by the United States and the other principal Western powers. Even during the War, the U.S. leaders, including Roosevelt and Eisenhower, were repeatedly criticized by their British counterparts for being short-sighted in not looking beyond the present circumstances to the political considerations in the post-war world.

Winston Churchill criticized Franklin D. Roosevelt's belief that appeasing Stalin was the correct formula for dealing with the temperamental Soviet leader. If Stalin were given whatever wartime assistance he needed, FDR was convinced that this would prevent him from annexing the countries of Eastern Europe after the war. Among the Allied military leaders, General Montgomery believed that General Eisenhower's reluctance to press the Western Allied armies as far as possible eastward, showed a lack of understanding "that it was of little avail to win the war strategically if we lost it

politically."[1]

As a result of this policy, the Western Allied armies stopped at the Elbe River in Germany, allowing the Soviets to overrun Eastern Europe and Eastern Germany. This line became the permanent Cold War boundary which Churchill called, "The Iron Curtain."

This stand-off necessitated the development of Western policies to deal with the Soviets and stop the spread of Communism. "Containment" emerged as the strategy of the next several decades. In February 1946, George Kennan, the Charge d'Affaires in Moscow, and a top U.S. authority on Soviet history, language and culture, cabled the State Department that the best American tactic for containing Soviet aggression was a patient, long-term struggle. He further counseled against panic regarding Soviet expansion, because the Soviets were internally focused and not bent on conquering Western Europe, Japan or the United States. Kennan believed that long-term political and military pressure would not only contain the Communists, but lead to "either the break-up or the gradual mellowing of the Soviet power."[2] How prophetic his position was, in light of the events of 1989-1990!

Though Kennan was more moderate in his approach to

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[1]Paul Johnson, Modern Times (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, Inc. 1983), 433-436.

[2]Ibid., 433-436, 450.

U.S./Soviet affairs, others in Washington were more forthright in their support for the military aspect of containment. Clark Clifford was one such advocate, concluding in a position paper he wrote for President Truman that "the language of military power is the only language the Russians understand."[3]

Dean Acheson, however, was the principal advocate of emphasizing military might as the chief tool to contain Communism. As Undersecretary of State in 1947, he persuaded the Republican-controlled Congress to allocate funds necessary for U.S. military and economic aid to Greece and Turkey, both trying to ward off leftist attacks on their central governments. He won Congressional approval by convincing legislators that the real issue underlying the Truman administration's desire to provide such aid was Communist containment. Acheson used the "one rotten apple can affect the whole barrel" theory to explain that if these nations fell to world Communism, then the whole region could fall, including mid-east oil producers. Senator Vandenburg, the Congressional spokesman, told Truman "that if [you] say that to Congress, [you] will be supported."[4] Truman subsequently spoke to Congress on March 12, 1947 and won broad support to

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[3]Ibid., 452.

[4]Ibid., 453.

aid to Greece and Turkey.

During this landmark speech, the President announced the "Truman Doctrine":

> I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or outside pressure . . . we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way.[5]

Truman elaborated that such U.S. help would be "primarily economic," and subsequently received a mandate from Congress when both houses gave him a two thirds majority vote, favoring his direction in foreign policy.

Rebuilding Western Europe was one of the key goals of the Truman Presidency. World events were moving rapidly and American public opinion had been alerted to the dangers of world Communism affecting the U.S. Also in March 1947, the President had ordered the federal loyalty program to begin its mission of uncovering possible Communists in the U.S. government, and Truman again won public support. Congress was obliged to follow and the "red scare" was on, "a scare that soon lost control to less responsible politicians."[6] Public opinion was strongly concerned with foreign policy as the specter of outside danger loomed, and consequently support

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[5]Ibid., 439-440.

[6]Walter Lafeber, The American Age: United States Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad since 1750 (New York: W. W. Norton and Company. 1989), 455.

grew for Truman's anti-Communist stance.

U.S. economic and military aid rapidly expanded following successes in Greece and Turkey, leading to optimism by U.S. leaders that they had discovered a formula for containing Communism. U.S. leaders felt "they could win anywhere--say in Vietnam and Korea, two areas where U.S. officials became more active in 1947."[7]

The Marshall Plan had its roots in World War II planning sessions, where preparations were made for the post-war economic environment. Allied economists had been anticipating the challenges of dealing with post-war devastation, and economies that needed new direction, while at the same time incorporating lessons learned from failures following World War I.

The Versailles Treaty, which concluded World War I, was so ineffective it had laid the seeds for World War II. It had been short-sighted and vindictive, stressing punishment to the Central Powers, rather than providing a framework of justice that would lead to world prosperity, healing and prevention of future conflicts.[8]

American President Woodrow Wilson had presented an

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[7]Ibid., 455.

[8]Fred L. Israel, Major Peace Treaties of Modern History: 1648-1967 (New York: McGraw Hill Book Co. 1967), 249-252, and Geoffrey Brunn and Dwight E. Lee, The Second World War and After (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Publishing Co. 1964), 52-55.

enlightened plan called the "23 Points" in 1918, and Ludendorf, the German leader, accepted these points as the basis for a general cease fire. Ludendorf had already begun to see the inevitability of defeat, even though the German victory over Russia had released a million soldiers to fight on the Western front. The coming of the American Expeditionary Force had turned the tide of the war, forcing the German Army to retreat towards Belgium with 9 million troops.[9]

The Wilson Plan had allowed Ludendorf an honorable end to the war, protecting both his army and the German civilian population from needless reprisals. It also protected Germany from dismemberment, allowing the Germans to retain the valuable industrial areas vital for post-war recovery.

Wilson's proposals were scrapped, however, by England's Prime Minister Lloyd-George and France's Clemenseau. These two leaders met with Colonel House, Wilson's advance diplomat to the post-war treaty conference, and convinced him to support the Anglo/French Plan which became the basis of the Versailles Treaty. French security fears had dominated these changes, and included land reparations of the Saar/Rhienland and Alsace/ Lorraine regions, and punitive monetary war reparations in excess of the restoration of war damage that Ludendorf had agreed to in the Wilson plan. Although John

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[9]Johnson, 24.

Maynard Keynes, the famous British economist, warned that these punitive plans were going to devastate post-war Europe, and negatively impact Great Britain and France, he was ignored. The changes were agreed to before Wilson arrived in Paris, and not communicated to the Germans until the Conference began. Wilson could not dissuade the other allies from the new plan, which left the Germans geographically and economically devastated, and feeling very much like they had been swindled.[10] Germany collapsed in the 1920's opening the door for the radicals who led the bitter German populace into the Hitler years of revenge.

Based largely on lessons learned from this failure of the previous generation, the American economists of World War II made some important plans at the post-war conferences held for that purpose. They were also influenced by the new role America was enjoying as leader of the western world. Men like Time/Life publisher Henry R. Luce, had been promoting America's emerging position of responsibility in the world. He convinced the majority of Americans that

> . . . their country was on the verge of assuming a role as a preeminent power, manifesting its economic, cultural, philanthropical, and political influence on

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[10]Georg Meidenbauer, retired German banking executive, interview by author, Monterey, California, October 16, 1992.

> societies all over the globe . . . it is America's first century as a dominant power in the world.[11]

The Bretton Woods Economic Conference, held in mid-1944 to plan post war recovery and allied cooperation, established international economic policy for the next several decades. The Conference was convened on the advice of FDR's economic advisors, because U.S. economic policy planners saw the positive impact of the war upon the U.S. economy, and feared a post-war return to economic depression. Industrial production had risen 90% from 1940 through 1944, agricultural production was up 20%, and total U.S. gross national product was up 60%. Post-war planners saw these results as signaling an end to U.S. isolationism, because a return to isolationism would plunge the U.S. into a 1930's style depression.

FDR's economic advisors believed the U.S. needed an open, orderly world market for U.S. goods, and made their opinions known in pointed fashion: Will Clayton, a former corporate executive who had joined the State Department, was one of FDR's most trusted economic advisors. He warned that without open, stable world trade, Americans would have to become "an armed camp, police the seven seas, tighten our belts, and live by ration books for the next century or so."[12] A second

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[11]Donald W. White, "The American Century in World History," Journal of World History Vol. 3, No. I (Spring 1992): 105.

[12]Lafeber, 410.

advisor, Henry Grady, similarly stated, "the capitalistic system is essentially an international system. If it cannot function internationally, it will break down." Another confidant of FDR's, Paul Nitze also gave similar advise in 1943.[13]

FDR's New Deal had provided an economic jumpstart, an answer to the terrible slump of depression-ridden America. But now U.S. officials had to come up with a plan to sustain the tremendous economic success generated by the war economy: "an international plan to replace the New Deal."[14] The new plan needed to be able to keep the U.S. economy going, help the war-ravaged world rebuild, and protect both from another Great Depression. American solutions were put forth to all non-Axis nations at the Bretton Woods, New Hampshire Conference.

The American economists, who dominated the conference, pushed through the establishment of two new international organizations. The first was the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the World Bank). It would start with a treasury of $7.6 billion (most provided by the U.S.), rebuild Europe and assist development projects in emerging nations in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The

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[13]Johnson, 260.

[14]Lafeber, 410.

second organization established was the International Monetary Fund (IMF), with a treasury of $7.3 billion (again mostly provided by the U.S.), and it's purpose was to assist nations with high trade deficits. IMF funds would be used to help stabilize national currencies which were suffering from internal problems, and stabilizing these currencies would help avoid the trade and currency wars of the depression era.

U.S. officials also insisted that the post-war world economic system be based solely on the U.S. dollar backed by gold. The U.S. possessed two-thirds of the world's gold in World War II, and was able to dominate the conference because of U.S. global economic and military power. American economists planned to use this power "to create an open, international marketplace that did not need excessive state interference or high tariffs."[15]

Following the war, the plans initiated at Bretton Woods were put in place, and the Marshall Plan was instituted to avoid the mistakes of the Versailles Treaty. On June 5, 1947, George Marshall, U.S. Secretary of State, announced the Marshall Plan. Formerly the senior ranking military officer during World War II, and special envoy to China, Marshall became Truman's Secretary of State in 1947. He held that post until 1949, when he was appointed Secretary of Defense for

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[15]Ibid., 411.

1950-51. His economic plan was a thirteen bill program, presented to and approved by Congress, to rebuild western Europe. European nations were invited to join the program which would provide financing to rebuild industry destroyed during the World War II. Twenty-two nations wanted to participate, knowing the price and rewards would be an open trading relationship with America, but Polish and Czech participation was vetoed by Stalin. The program began in July of 1948, and ran for three years at a cost of more than $13 billion dollars. It helped integrate Western Europe into the U.S. controlled alliance against the Communists. The Marshall Plan also provided tremendous markets for U.S. goods, which was exactly what U.S. government officials had hoped to obtain to keep U.S. factories going.[16]

U.S. Presidents after Truman used the Truman Doctrine (and the attendant international economic philosophy of the Marshall Plan) to justify U.S. foreign policy around the world. Senator William J. Fullbright wrote in the 1970's: "More by far than any other factor, the anti-Communism of the Truman Doctrine has been the guiding spirit of American foreign policy since World War II."[17] The Marshall Plan "laid the foundation for a self-reliant Western and Southern Europe;

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[16]Ibid., 455.

[17]Ibid., 440.

by 1950 it was manifestly an overwhelming success."[18]

The Communists were threatened by this bold allied move, however, and the Soviets reacted to the Marshall Plan's success by first rejecting participation for themselves and their satellites, then retreating behind the "Iron Curtain" to set up their own trade pacts within the Communist world. This move toward Communist isolationism appeared to the West to be sinister, viewed more like a snake coiling in preparation for a strike than a retreat, hence this Soviet action added to Cold War tension and fueled U.S. Congressional actions aimed at Soviet containment.

The Marshall Plan worked well in Western Europe where there existed "a skilled labor force, a great potential industrial economy and largely stable political societies." Living standards were improved in the largest countries, where most of the monies were spent, and the plan yielded an additional effect of smothering the local Communist parties. It also sealed the fate of a polarized world, one free, the other totalitarian.[19] But in other parts of the world where these certain conditions did not exist, and where attitudes about U.S. economic aid had different implications, the Marshall Plan formula did not work as well.

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[18]Johnson, 440.

[19]Lafeber, 456-458.

America and her post-war allies also undertook a series of treaties aimed at containing the Communists through promises of mutual defense. The largest of these alliances was the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Founded in April of 1949, NATO would protect Western Europe now restored by the Marshall Plan. Western Germany would be part of the Alliance, over the protests of the French, who feared German recovery. The U.S. Congress approved this military defense pact overwhelmingly, but retained for itself the same power to declare war it held in the Constitution, not wanting to give this away to the President or a foreign committee.

Other treaties during these years included the Rio Treaty of 1947 (affecting U.S. defense ties with Latin America), the Anzus Treaty of 1951 (with Australian and New Zealand) and Bilateral Treaties with the Philippines (1951), South Korea (1953) and Japan (1960). Vietnam was protected under the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty of 1954.

CONTAINING COMMUNISM IN ASIA

In contrast to the evident post-war success in revitalizing Western Europe and protecting it from Communism, U.S. attempts to contain Mao Zedong in China had become a disaster. In 1949, Mao captured all of mainland China, forcing Chiang Kai-shek's KMT forces to evacuate to Formosa.

Also that same year, the Soviets added to world tension by exploding their first atomic bomb. In February of 1950, Mao traveled to Moscow and signed an alliance with Stalin, a relationship which would endure thirteen years until the Sino/Soviet split in 1963.[20]

To make things worse for the U.S., Stalin was dealing with North Korean Communist Dictator, Kim Il Sung, who wanted Soviet backing to consolidate the Korean Peninsula under his control. Stalin agreed, and Kim's forces invaded South Korea in June, 1950.

The Korean War seemed to vindicate U.S. policies highlighting the dangers of Communism, and emphasizing the need to contain its spread. This conflict, on the heels of Chiang's defeat, showed that Communist strategy was changing from subversion to armed conflict, and aroused fears that U.S. interests worldwide were in peril. First Truman, then Eisenhower (who finished the war in 1953), wanted to avoid repeating in Korea the historical errors of appeasing Japan in 1931 and Germany in 1936-1938. Unfortunately, the result of the war in Korea was a stalemate/ceasefire at the 38th parallel, leaving the Communists intact in the north. Korea has remained divided ever since.[21]

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[20]Ibid., 470-478.

[21]Ibid., 488.

Southeast Asia, particularly Vietnam, where the nationalist Viet Minh were warring against the French colonial regime, was now in the forefront of containment strategy. Nationalist Vietnamese, many of whom were Communist led by Ho Chi Minh, were the heirs of a long tradition of fighting for Vietnamese independence and autonomy. From before Christ, Vietnamese patriots had opposed foreign oppressors; first the Chinese for a thousand years (approximately 100 B.C. to 900 A.D.), later the French beginning in 1858 and finally the Japanese during World War II.[22] Once China had entered the Korean War on the side of North Korea, and had altered the outcome of the war, the vast presence of the Communist Chinese bordering French Indochina became more significant. If China controlled Vietnam (via Ho's Viet Minh) with its strategic harbors, air fields and its geographical position as a gateway to the rest of the South Pacific, the Chinese could tilt the balance of power in the region in favor of the Communists. The other aspect of Vietnam's significance was its natural resource potential, recognized by American planners as vital

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[22]For an overview of Vietnamese history, see the following: Keith Well Taylor, The Birth of Vietnam (Berkeley, California: U.C. Berkeley Press, 1983), Joseph Buttinger, Vietnam: A Dragon Embattled (New York: Fredrick A. Praeger Publishers, 1967), William J. Duiker, The Communist Road to Power in Vietnam (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1981), David G. Marr, Vietnamese Anticolonialism 1885-1925 (Berkeley, California: U.C. Berkeley Press, 1971) and Douglas Pike, Vietnam and the Soviet Union (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1987).

to rebuilding Japan (a country greatly in need of raw materials). Japan was now critical to U.S. containment policy in Asia, and rebuilding Japan became almost as important as rebuilding Western Europe. If Southeast Asia was closed to Japan, U.S. officials feared the Japanese would turn to China for their economic needs, or dump cheap goods on the U.S. market.

In 1945, the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS) not only worked with the Viet Minh to aid the allied war effort, they also assisted Ho in planning his "August Revolution" and securing the abdication of the Emperor Bao Dai. These U.S. agents saw Ho as a competent leader of an admittedly left-wing government, which would nevertheless be friendly toward the United States. Historian Paul Johnson goes further saying: "The man who, in effect, crowned Ho as the new ruler was an OSS agent, Archimedes Patti."[23]

The OSS agents had been acting on good faith in accordance with the long-standing policy of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Throughout the war Roosevelt had an established policy position: the French should not return to Vietnam after the war, and further, the Vietnamese should have elections overseen by an international commission, (in other words, self-determination). The OSS agents, familiar with Ho and

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[23]Johnson, 630.

seeing the strength of the Viet Minh, thought they were the obvious force to be, at least, an interim government, effectively replacing both the Japanese and the French. However, unbeknownst to OSS agents in the field, a major shift in U.S. policy had taken place, primarily due to the death of FDR in April 45.[24]

His successor, President Truman, did not carry forward with FDR's policy regarding Vietnamese self-determination. He was first of all concerned with ending the war, dealing with the use (and post-war implications of) the atomic bomb, and handling the post-war threat in Europe posed by the Soviet Army. As part of this Western European focus, France became crucial, and Vietnam was a valuable colony which the French planned to retain.

U.S. officials knew efforts to rebuild Germany were very disturbing to the French, "who turned livid whenever German recovery was mentioned."[25] Because the U.S. desired a stable, non-Communist France as a vital bastion against the Soviets, depriving France of their economically important Indochinese colony was unwise. French leader, Charles De Gaulle, was also adamant on retaining this colony, and

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[24]Ronald H. Spector, Advise and Support - The Early Years 1941-1961: The U.S. Army in Vietnam (Washington, D.C.: Center for Military History, 1983), 21-23.

[25]Lafeber, 437.

Churchill lent his support to the French position because he wanted Britain to retain its Empire as well. Ho's Communist background gave the American's another reason for supporting the French.

France then reasserted its colonial control, ousting the Viet Minh government in 1946. Ho took his forces into the Vietnamese hinterland and began to wage a war of independence. This Viet Minh War lasted until 1954.

By 1950, the French were losing in Indochina and tried themselves to make some concessions to Ho Chi Minh, but Ho believed he could win and rejected the "colonial" overtures. That year the French brought back Vietnamese Emperor Bao Dai, including him in their government in hopes of winning popular support, but the people saw him more as a French puppet, someone who couldn't compete with the popularity of Ho. For his part, Ho repeatedly asked the U.S. to recognize his quest for Vietnamese independence, yet the U.S. continued to ignore him, exercising tunnel vision in their hope that the French would win. Intelligence reports gathered by the U.S. during this period showed that Ho was not anti-U.S. and not under Moscow's control. Acheson was so concerned with the spread of Communism, however, that whatever hope Ho might have retained for U.S. recognition effectively died when Acheson became Secretary of State. In May of 1949, Acheson cabled U.S. diplomats in the Far East telling them, "Ho must be an

outright Commie. The question whether Ho is as much Nationalist as Commie is irrelevant. All Stalinists in colonial areas are nationalists." This failure to see any difference between the Vietnamese Communists and the Russian Communists, or to understand the age-old nationalistic hostility between the Vietnamese and the Chinese, doomed U.S./Vietnamese relations to the tragic history that followed.[26]

ECONOMIC AID PROGRAMS IN ASIA

Part of America's containment strategy in Southeast Asia was economic aid, because the region was so underdeveloped. A series of projects were envisioned by the U.S. and the United Nations to develop the region and promote trade with the non-Communist world. Truman presented a program to area governments in 1949 called "Point Four," in which he made U.S. science and technology available to underdeveloped areas. In pushing this program through, Truman had to deal with a Congress which was reluctant to spend dollars in Southeast Asia because of the Marshall Plan's financial commitment to Europe, and subsequently the additional costs associated with fighting the Korean War.

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[26]Ibid., 494.

Nonetheless, the U.S. and international organizations were able to proceed in developing and funding economic projects in Southeast Asia. These projects provided examples of regional economic cooperation that the Johnson administration would draw upon when it formulated its policies of reconstruction aid in 1965.

At the international level, in January of 1950, then Australian Prime Minister Percy Spender convened a meeting of fellow Commonwealth Prime Ministers in Colombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) and there proposed a far-reaching program of development projects for Southeast Asian nations, a kind of "Marshall Plan" for that region. An oversight committee was established and met in May to develop principles and goals of what became known as the Colombo Plan. Activated in July 1951, the project conducted scientific research in regional agriculture and industry, sharing findings among Colombo Plan participants.

As envisioned by the Bretton Woods Conference, the World Bank in part financed the Colombo project, while the remaining funds were obtained from regional donors, as well as the United States and Japan (which joined later). Research results were shared with all participants, and new technologies were employed by recipient nations to improve agriculture, construct dams for flood control and hydro-electric development, etc. The Colombo Project formed the

foundation upon which other regional development programs would be built, including those of later U.S. government planners. Self-help, promoted by international funding, produced mutually beneficial research and development programs, and provided the Colombo visionaries with examples of successful third world economic cooperation.[27]

The United Nations also became active in Southeast Asia during the Korean war. In 1952 under the auspices of the U.N. Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE), a plan was envisioned to harness the unruly Mekong River and its watershed, for the benefit of Thailand, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia. ECAFE sponsored research scientists and engineers to do preliminary studies of the region, looking for suitable projects. In 1956, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation joined the study, and in 1957 the Mekong Committee was formed, consisting of representatives of the riparian nations, (but excluding the North Vietnamese, who were invited to join after 1954, but saw little value to the project as the Mekong doesn't run through North Vietnam). A variety of projects were examined, but were

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[27]For a more through examination of the Colombo Project see articles in the Encyclopedia Americana, International Edition, vol. 7, (Danbury, CT: Grolier Inc., 1990). The New Encyclopedia Brittanica, vol. 3, Ready Reference, (Chicago: Encyclopedia Brittanica Inc., 1992). The World Book Encyclopedia, vol. 4. (Chicago: World Book Inc., 1992).

later abandoned because of later regional warfare.[28] Japan also contributed to regional development projects, both from choice, and because the 1951 San Francisco Conference required them to give reparation payments to French Indochina and other states. These payments helped build a power plant in Southern Vietnam and contributed to other practical projects. Japan continued payments until the entire required amount was completed in 1965.[29]

Despite some Congressional reluctance, American support for these peaceful development projects, and for military aid to the French in Vietnam, were significant because they represented tangible examples of the Truman Doctrine. In March of 1950 Truman decided to increase U.S. support for the French, and committed more after the Korean War started.

He sent a joint State Department/Defense Department fact-finding mission to Vietnam in December of 1950 which reported back to Acheson that

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[28]United National Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE) Pamphlet on Mekong Committee, (New York: United Nations Publishing, 1967), 3-5.

[29]Thomas R. H. Havens, Fire Across the Sea: The Vietnam War and Japan 1965-1975 (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 255.

> America without Asia will have been reduced to the western hemisphere and a precarious foothold on the western fringe of the European continent. Success (in Indochina) will vindicate (American economic and military aid efforts) and give added meaning to America and the American way of life.[30]

So the Truman doctrine of containment was extended to Vietnam.

When, the French were defeated at Dien Bien Phu, an outpost not far from the Laotian border west of Hanoi in 1954, they sought to extract themselves from the conflict. The subsequent Geneva Conference (the international meeting to determine the fate of Indochina) yielded a divided Vietnam with Ho's Viet Minh controlling the North, and Ngo Dinh Diem installed as President of the South. Franco-American relations in Vietnam also changed, transitioning the next year from France being an intermediary between the U.S. and Vietnamese, to the U.S. dealing directly with the South Vietnamese. Until Geneva, the U.S. had provided military and economic aid to the French, who used it as they thought best. Following Geneva, "Americans were admitted as full partners in the effort to contain Vietnamese Communism."[31]

By 1955, the U.S. had been supplying military and economic aid to Vietnam for five years, but after a spring 1955 conference between the French, the Americans, and the

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[30]Ibid., 495.

[31]Daniel P. O'C. Greene, "End of Franco-American Entente in Indochina," Diplomatic History Vol. 16, No. 4 (Fall 1992), 552.

British, the U.S. agreed to be the principal supporter of Diem, who continued as the South Vietnamese President after he successfully defeated a religious sect rebellion at mid-year.[32]

In 1956, Diem was asserting his authority with stronger U.S. backing. He used his growing power to "nullify key provisions of the Geneva agreements."[33] A key issue in these agreements had been nation-wide elections scheduled for the summer of 1956. President Eisenhower and Secretary of State Dulles allowed Diem to follow this course, because all three feared an honest election would yield a solid Communist victory, with Ho Chi Minh becoming the ruler of all Vietnam. At the time, U.S. officials were advising Eisenhower that Diem could only survive with significant U.S. aid. According to Kenneth T. Young, State Department Director of Philippine and Southeast Asia Affairs, this would include "aircraft, ammunition, and possibly operational advice."[34]

Following Diem's refusal to allow elections in 1956, Ho generated a three year period of political unrest in the South through propaganda and other more subtle forms of agitation. He had been unhappy with the Geneva settlement, but had

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[32]Ibid., 555.

[33]Ibid., 570.

[34]Ibid., 571.

accepted it because the Chinese and Soviets counseled him to be patient, advised him that Diem was extremely weak, and told him he would easily win the 1956 elections. The fact that Diem held power for nine years became known as the "miracle" of Southeast Asia, surprising Communist and non-Communist alike, and gained lasting U.S. support for South Vietnam.[35]

Eisenhower's policies in Vietnam were affected by progress in the suppression of Communist movements in British Malaya and the Philippines. In both these cases government forces seemed to be winning, giving the U.S. hope for Diem's government in South Vietnam. "Ike" understood the appeal of Communism in the third world and warned his cabinet: "Unless we put [needed] things into the hands of people who are starving to death we can never lick Communism." As a result of this philosophy, U.S. aid increased around the world as the United States focused on "nation building" in Third World countries.[36] The Americans poured economic and military aid into South Vietnam, convinced that their actions would result in victory.

Eisenhower feared that the entire Pacific rim needed concerted U.S. efforts, or the Pacific "would become a Communist lake." In a press conference, Ike elaborated that

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[35]Douglas Pike, telephone interview by author, September 24, 1992.

[36]Lafeber, 513.

the loss of Japan alone would be "just incalculable to the free world."[37] The U.S. sought a stable Japan, a contained China, and an independent Taiwan, and Eisenhower believed that South Vietnam must be held, because it could start a chain of "falling dominoes" in Southeast Asia.

The U.S. sent in military and political advisers to help Diem, including General J. Lawton Collins and Col. Edward Lansdale. Collins didn't believe Diem had the knack to lead the fractured elements that made up South Vietnam's political landscape, but Lansdale was fresh from assisting Filipino leaders defeat their Communist guerrillas, and he was confident he could repeat the process with Diem in Vietnam, making it a viable nation. However, Diem constantly frustrated U.S. advisors by accepting all the economic and military aid he could, but refusing the U.S. guidance which accompanied that aid.[38]

As Diem consolidated his own power, using his secret police to eliminate rivals, he also gradually alienated growing segments of the South Vietnamese population. He refused to initiate needed policy reforms in land use and taxes, while constantly developing a corrupt bureaucracy which

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[37]Ibid., 520. Dwight Eisenhower Press Conference, April 7, 1954.

[38]Vietnam: A Television History of America's Mandarin 1954-1963 vol. 3. (Time/Life Video Library, 1986).

fed off the people, rather than served them. The U.S. allowed him to use American advisors to build and train his Army, but Diem used the Army as much to keep himself in power, as to ward off the Communists within and without South Vietnam. His policies so alienated the peasant population, that the countryside became fertile recruiting ground for the new phase of Communist attempts at unifying Vietnam under Ho's control.[39]

Ho's three year propaganda war ended in 1959 when he sought and received an increase in aid from the Soviets and Chinese. As a result, Vietnam became an "aid battleground" in the Cold War. The stand off between the two Vietnamese regimes ended in May 1959, when backed by his colleagues in the 15th Lao Dong plenum, Ho decided to begin armed struggle in the South. He formed the National Liberation Front (NLF), in the South (which the Americans came to call the Viet Cong or VC). Using a combination of propaganda teams and guerrillas, the Communists fought the South for five years before the "big unit" war began in 1965. This propaganda/guerrilla technique was similar to that used by the Haganah in Palestine, and the Irish Republican Army in

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[39]Lafeber, 525.

Britain.[40]

When President John F. Kennedy took office in 1961, he inherited the situation in Vietnam. He decided to continue and to expand the U.S. role there for several reasons, among them his desire to continue Eisenhower's positive work in supporting the "Diem miracle," and his belief that Vietnam was important in the fight to contain Communism.[41]

Kennedy's Secretary of State was Dean Rusk, former Assistant Secretary of State for Far East Affairs under Dean Acheson. Rusk advocated an active U.S. Far East foreign policy in 1961, supporting the continuation of the Colombo Project, the Mekong Committee, and those kind of projects which showed a definite difference between the American way and the Soviet way. Projects to build third world agriculture, business, health and infrastructure, were contrasted to Communist policies which were an "extension of tyranny and [used] the Big Lie, sabotage, suspicion, riot and assassination as its tools."[42] This thinking fit perfectly into Kennedy's program, as he had established the Alliance for Progress to combat Castroism by pumping $20 billion dollars of

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[40]Douglas Pike, ed. The Vietnam War: A Reader, vol. 1 and 2. (San Jose: California State University, San Jose Press, 1989), 1-10.

[41]David Halbertstam, The Best and Brightest (New York: Random House, Inc., 1969), 22.

[42]Ibid., 327.

U.S. aid over the next ten years into Latin America. This aid was to be given in return for Latin American leaders initiating land and tax reforms for the poor and middle class. Kennedy had high hopes that this and other international aid projects would counteract Communism, but in the end (long after his death in 1963), the Alliance for Progress failed because the money was controlled by elitists who kept the wealth, not wanting social change anyway.[43]

Kennedy's escalation in Vietnam can be largely attributed to events in Cuba in April of 1961. The Bay of Pigs invasion was a disaster, as a unified Cuban government/military routed the rebels, aided by the lack of promised U.S. air support. Kennedy had withheld U.S. air power because he feared it might cause Khrushchev to invade West Berlin. Kennedy was humiliated by the Bay of Pigs failure, but went before the American people and took full responsibility. He asked for Americans to rally behind a new Cold War fight that was heating up--this time in Vietnam.[44]

In the 1950's Kennedy had criticized Truman for losing China, and Eisenhower for being soft on Castro. Now Kennedy was criticized by the American media. Indochina had received over $1 billion in aid between 1955 and 1961, plus 658 U.S.

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[43]Lafeber, 557.

[44]Ibid., 560-561.

military advisors to Vietnam and 300 to Laos, but the situation had not been stabilized.

As a result of these factors, Kennedy felt pressure to act decisively, and between January and May 1961 he sent 500 more Green Berets into Vietnam, thus exceeding the troop ceiling established by the 1954 Geneva agreement. He felt the need to bolster the Diem regime because the South Vietnamese government was failing. The NLF was winning the "hearts and minds" of the peasants, China was accelerating its economic aid to North Vietnam, and by 1963, even some non-Communists were joining the NLF. All this forced a Kennedy decision, and he chose escalation, committing the U.S. to "save Vietnam."[45]

In 1961, a joint Defense Department/State Department team headed by General Maxwell Taylor and Walter W. Rostow returned from a fact-finding tour to Vietnam, telling Kennedy that only major increases in U.S. forces would save Diem. Kennedy accepted this report, and during 1962 and 1963 increased aid levels to $185 million annually and sent an additional 10,000 U.S. advisors to Vietnam, bringing the total by November 1963 to 16,000.[46]

In early 1961, Kennedy met Khrushchev in Vienna, and afterward he was reported to have said that the meeting was

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[45]Ibid., 563.

[46]Pike, ed. The Vietnam War: A Reader, 187.

the "roughest thing in my life." The Soviet leader had bullied the President, surprising him with the intensity of his verbal attack, catching Kennedy totally off guard. This meeting, combined with the Bay of Pigs incident, added to Kennedy's determination to win in Vietnam.[47]

Throughout 1962 and 1963, Diem was floundering and American leaders feared the "wheels might fall off" any day. In September 1963, Kennedy reemphasized to a reporter that he believed in the "Domino Theory," and that Diem looked worse than ever. Additionally, the President was still wary of Chinese support for Ho.[48]

At this same time, South Vietnamese generals had been hatching a coup d'etat plot to oust the hated Diem. The CIA learned of the plot, and signaled these generals that the U.S. approved. Kennedy put a plane at Diem's disposal so he and his extended family could get out safely, but Diem and his brother Ngo Dinh Ngu refused the U.S. plane, thinking they could lead a counter-coup and retain power. This was tragic, however, as the two brothers were captured and executed within hours. Madame Ngu, Diem's sister-in-law and part of the "triumvirate" that had led the government, was in the U.S. at

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[47]Halbertstam, 76.

[48]Lafeber, 564.

the time, and escaped death.[49] A short three weeks after the Diem's demise, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, and the Vietnam War and the effort to use aid to build a viable South Vietnam, became the responsibilities of Lyndon B. Johnson.

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[49]Douglas Pike, telephone interview by author, Berkeley, California, September 24, 1992.

CHAPTER TWO

President Lyndon B. Johnson brought a strong personality and a New Dealer's taste for state-sponsored development projects to his administration, and applied both to his own philosophy for solving the war in Vietnam. He believed that the "carrot-and-stick" strategy of dealing with the North Vietnamese would bring them to accept a ceasefire under mutually agreeable terms.

Johnson's principal failure during the Vietnam War, which reached its zenith during his presidency (1964-1969), was to misunderstand the Communists' commitment to their long-term goal of reunifying Vietnam under their control. Johnson tried to dissuade the North Vietnamese from this goal by offering a generous aid "carrot," while at the same time threatening them with the "stick"--a constantly escalating U.S. troop presence and bombing program. Johnson never accepted the fact that the North Vietnamese were willing to do without U.S. aid (even though they could have used it), because they were receiving enough aid from the Soviets and Communist Chinese to survive. The North Vietnamese were willing to endure tremendous casualties and material destruction, yet persist in their struggle for a unified country. Consequently, Johnson's "carrot" provided too little incentive, and the "stick" too little threat.

Johnson also relied upon his personality and experience to solve his inherited Vietnam problem. He was a veteran of thirty years in the House, Senate and Vice-Presidency, and his strong personality had brought him great success in dealing with those he had to either win over, or bowl over. His ability to provide an array of development and other projects to help out his constituencies had proved effective through the years. But Johnson tried to transfer a proven method of dealing with Americans to a completely different culture. He further showed that he had little grasp of Vietnamese history in general, or of the dedication the Communist Vietnamese had brought to their fight against the Japanese and French in Johnson's own lifetime.[50]

Another goal of the new President was to cure the many social wrongs he observed in American society. Johnson drew upon his years of Congressional experience to formulate a plan to deal with America's ills (including poverty and racial injustice), calling his comprehensive program for transforming America, the "Great Society." However, from the beginning of his presidency (1963), he would have the threat of the costs associated with war in Vietnam impacting the funding requirements needed by his "Great Society" program.

During the 1964 Presidential campaign, Johnson's

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[50]Halbertstam, 452.

Republican challenger, Senator Barry Goldwater, demanded tougher miliary responses to existing world crises (i.e. Panama, Cuba and Vietnam). Johnson didn't want to appear weak militarily, but had to balance this with getting his vast social program going as soon as possible, and he knew he couldn't get the "Great Society" off the ground without an election victory. A political windfall came his way when, on August 2, 1964, North Vietnamese PT boats attacked a U.S. Navy destroyer in the Gulf of Tonkin. Johnson had accused Goldwater of being a warmonger, and had used a television ad juxtaposing film of a little girl with that of a nuclear bomb blast to underscore the point. The Gulf of Tonkin event gave Johnson the opportunity to show his own toughness in responding to an "unprovoked" hostile attack with swift military retaliation. The public response helped Congress vote overwhelmingly (House 410-0, Senate 88-2) for a resolution giving the President a virtual blank check to deal with the situation as he thought appropriate.[51]

Thus Johnson bombed North Vietnam with wide public support only three months before the election. His decisive military leadership, combined with his "Great Society" program promises, gave him the widest winning percentage in U.S. election history. It was a mandate from the American people,

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[51]Vietnam: LBJ Goes to War, 1964-1965. vol. 4. (Time/Life Video Library, 1986).

so Johnson was able to get legislation passed like never before, "because the country was finally ready to do something about its long-ignored social problems." Johnson wanted to "go down in history as a Roosevelt-like figure."[52] Because of his desire to succeed not only domestically, but internationally, he drew on all this background and was quick to pledge: "I am not going to be the President who saw Southeast Asia go the way China went." He accepted the "line drawn in the sand," he had inherited, and was determined to achieve American victory.[53]

1965 was the beginning of Johnson's "own" presidency and he instituted his strategy for dealing with Ho Chi Minh. That February he had to deal with a Communist attack at Pleiku in the South Vietnamese Highlands, where seven Americans were killed and 109 wounded. Johnson began his carrot and stick program by ordering retaliatory bombing, while at the same time offering the North Vietnamese an opportunity to share in an aid program worth $1 billion. Henry Kissinger explained the reason for this change (utilized by both Johnson and Nixon), in his memoirs: "We thought we could induce an undefeated enemy to accept compromise terms."[54]

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[52]Halbertstam, 529.

[53]Lafeber, 573.

[54]Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, 38.

Johnson's two-fold reliance on the power of the American military and the power of government development programs had grown during his formative years in Congress, both during and after World War II. He had also witnessed the appeasement of Munich, had seen China lost to Communism, and thus was a true "Cold Warrior." He had, however, also observed the effectiveness of the Marshall Plan, and in Southeast Asia saw the Mekong Committee as a potential counterpart to the Tennessee Valley Authority program which had developed hydroelectric and agricultural projects, while at the same time creating needed jobs. As a result, the President pledged massive support for a Mekong River Basin development project that would include the Communists:

> We would hope that North Vietnam would take its place in the common effort just as soon as peaceful cooperation is possible. . . the vast Mekong River can provide food and water and power on a scale to dwarf even our own Tennessee Valley Authority. For our part I will ask the Congress to join in a billion dollar American investment in this effort.[55]

Johnson continually failed to understand that his perspective of a depression era American was different from a 1960's Vietnamese Communist, whose goal was national reunification. He said to Bill Moyers, the White House Press Secretary, after

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[55]Marjorie Niehaus, Congressional Research Service Report. "A Chronology of Selected Statements by Administration Officials on the Subject of Postwar Reconstruction Aid to Indochina: April 7, 1965 - April 4, 1976." (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service. 1973.), 1.

the offer had been made: "Old Ho can't turn that down."[56]

But Ho Chi Minh was not the "reasonable" type of negotiator Johnson was used to--he refused the President's offer. Johnson was surprised, but decided he hadn't found the right combination of pressure and reward, so he decided to continue escalation.

By July 1965, the U.S. had 125,000 troops in Vietnam and Johnson was beginning to feel trapped. Bill Moyers recalled the President saying that America's plight in Vietnam was just like he (Johnson) felt when he was a boy caught in a Texas hail storm: "You can't run, can't hide, and can't make it stop."[57]

But Johnson stood by his philosophy, believing he had insights into the motivations of the Communist leaders; a kind of Asian populist view: "Those people out there . . .don't want to go to war . . . they want the good things in life." This may have been true of Americans Johnson was used to dealing with, but he completely misunderstood Vietnamese history and the motivation of its people.[58]

After Ho repeatedly failed tc respond to either Johnson's carrots or sticks, the President was left with two basic

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[56]Vietnam Video Series, vol. 4.

[57]Ibid.

[58]Johnson, 594

choices--stay in Vietnam or leave. Johnson boxed himself into a corner by choosing to interpret withdrawal as a "cut and run", while he defined staying as "showing resolve to the world."[59] During his State of the Union Address on January 12, 1966, the President declared, "we must stand (in Vietnam) or see the promise of two centuries (of American history) crumble." Johnson chose to fight for the South Vietnamese status quo rather than support either a ground strike into North Vietnam (to unite the country under the South Vietnamese), or to pull out U.S. forces and let the Vietnamese work out their own national destiny. Johnson's failure to understand the Vietnamese historical continuum that Ho represented doomed him to a fortress mentality where the U.S. would basically counter-punch Communist aggression throughout Johnson's presidency--a position where his soldiers could neither win, nor exit Vietnam.

Johnson was in another dilemma. He was asking Congress to fund Great Society social programs, pay for a large Cold War military, give aid to the Mekong Project and other third world programs, and at the same time fund the military costs associated with waging an escalating war in Vietnam. This was the same dilemma Eisenhower had faced in 1954, when he had to decide if supporting the French effort was worth the risk of

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[59]Vietnam Video Series, vol. 4.

a budget deficit. Johnson faced the same dilemma, but decided to fund the war anyway (with deficit budgets). He "feared that if the true economic cost of the war became visible. . . he would loose his Great Society programs." By 1968 his decision to place a ceiling on troop strength in Vietnam was "as much economic as political."[60]

Johnson proceeded to escalate militarily, and to follow through with the earlier aid projects envisioned for South Vietnam. He also commissioned an extensive study of an independent South Vietnamese economy, in anticipation of the post war period. The study was conducted by the Joint Development Group (JDG) which had its origins at an October 1966 meeting in Manila between Johnson, and his Vietnamese counterparts, President Nguyen Van Thieu and Vice President Nguyen Cao Ky.

Johnson was committed to building the South Vietnamese economy, not only to make it a viable independent country, but also to show the Communists how much aid they could realistically expect if they acquiesced to U.S. ceasefire demands. Johnson thought his plan was undeniably good, and continued to be amazed at Ho's refusal to jump at his offer. Johnson ignored the information fed to him by U.S. intelligence community sources, which during and after the war

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[60]Lafeber, 604.

showed hard economic and demographic reasons why Ho could turn down U.S. aid offers. In reality Ho had everything he needed to fight a protracted war, and maintain his long term goals.

In 1965 and 1966 the Gross National Product of North Vietnam actually went up. It dropped in 1967 somewhat, but stayed close to even keel through 1973. Its allies, China and the Soviet Union, funneled $1.6 billion in economic and military aid to it during the 1967-1973 period, which was four times the actual war loss due to U.S. bomb damage. Demographics also favored a protracted war (given the willingness of the Communists to sacrifice human lives for their cause). Some 200,000 young men came of military service age annually, and the North was experiencing no net loss. Since only 40% of males ages 17-35 had served in the military, "the war of attrition had barely touched them; we [the U.S.] were not even keeping up with their birth rate."[61]

From the JDG's inception in February 1967, to the submission of its final report in March 1969, over forty working papers were produced detailing prospective development projects. These discussion papers, plus an additional twelve papers dealing specifically with development of the Mekong Delta, became part of the historical file used by the Paris

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[61]Halbertstam, 644-652.

negotiators from 1969-1973.[62]

The JDG was so named because it combined the work of a Vietnamese effort called "Postwar Planning Group" headed by Professor Vu Quoc Thuc of the University of Saigon, with that of the Development and Resources Corporation of New York, headed by David E. Lilienthal. Lilienthal was the long time head of the Tennessee Valley Authority, and in 1946 had co-chaired with Dean Acheson a committee which recommended proper use and control of atomic energy and raw materials.[63]

The research document which the JDG produced is commonly known as the "Lilienthal Study." It's final report was submitted in March 1969, and laid out the task of the JDG:

> To examine the probable problems and opportunities of the post war period and to establish policies and programs for the rapid restoration and development of the Vietnamese economy once peace should arrive.[64]

The JDG had no official recognized status in either government. It started out with Vietnamese private citizens and members of a private American company, who freely communicated, as needed, with both governmental and non-governmental agencies in Vietnam and the U.S. Opinions expressed were the responsibility of the JDG, not of either

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[62]Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, 39.

[63]Lafeber, 447.

[64]Joint Development Group, The Postwar Development of the Republic of Vietnam: Policies and Program vol. 1. (New York: Development and Resources Corporation. 1969), p. X.

government. Mr. Lilienthal's company was contacted by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), which carried out foreign development projects, and was heavily involved in Vietnam throughout the war. Neither government attempted to define or regulate the two JDG partners' relationship, however a close working relationship did develop with extensive bilateral cooperation, including shared office space, staff and letterhead.[65]

This report provided the Johnson administration with specific recommendations regarding South Vietnamese post-war planning in the areas of economic policy, agriculture, industry, manpower, infrastructure and institutional support. The report also provided Henry Kissinger and the Paris negotiating team years of research into areas where they needed information on reconstruction aid, thus placing Communist demands in a context of regional realities.[66]

Not all of the recommendations of the JDG report had to wait for the post-war period for implementation. In November 1967 a preliminary report was submitted to South Vietnamese President Thieu presenting programs that could begin immediately, such as projects in water control, agriculture, industry and refugee resettlement. However, the later, final

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[65]Ibid.

[66]Henry Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, 38.

report admitted, that the Communist Tet Offensive of early 1968 "destroyed our early hopes that something more constructive could be done immediately to alleviate the lot of the refugees."[67]

The final JDG report also contained financial projections and recommendations, utilized in later negotiations with Hanoi. The report projected that during the decade following the conclusion of the war, approximately $5 billion was needed for investment in South Vietnam to fund the total development program. Half of the necessary funding was to come from South Vietnam government sources, half from South Vietnamese private sector. Also recommended was a contribution to the South Vietnamese economy of $2.5 billion in U.S. foreign aid. This figure was linked to the projected South Vietnamese trade deficit for that same ten year, post-war period. It is probably no coincidence that the Paris negotiators used similar figures when discussing the reconstruction aid the U.S. would provide to North Vietnam, nor that Nixon's secret letter to North Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Van Dong pledged a similar amount.[68]

Hopes of negotiating an end to the war during the Johnson administration diminished in 1967; General Wheeler was

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[67]Joint Development Group Report, vol. 1. xv.

[68]See Appendix A. The amount stated in Nixon's letter was $3.25 billion.

predicting a military stand off with increased U.S. casualties unless the Americans greatly increased military strength. Additionally, Dean Rusk was advising Johnson that if the U.S. appeared to be eager to negotiate, it would show weakness to the Communists. Rusk advised waiting until Hanoi signaled its willingness to begin serious talks.[69]

For all of the reasons Johnson decided to pursue the Vietnam War, he couldn't escape his economic dilemma: without raising taxes to pay for the war, the economy suffered and his "Great Society" suffered as war expenses rose. The war's costs were astounding: in 1966 $18 billion, and in 1967 $21 billion. Yet, in spite of all this expense, U.S. technology was not overcoming the Communists willingness to fight on. By 1967 the U.S. estimated North Vietnamese losses since 1960 at 700,000 soldiers, yet there appeared to be no end to their willingness to sacrifice, and their ability to absorb punishment. Between July 1965 and December 1967, Johnson had ordered more bombs dropped on Vietnam than in all World War II, and had killed an estimated 350,000 people. At the same time, the total Communist forces in South Vietnam rose from 187,000 to 261,000.[70]

Despite his lack of success, Johnson remained committed

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[69]Halbertstam, 617-621.

[70]Ibid., 580-583.

to his course of action in Vietnam, and was getting advice from his staff which reinforced his decisions. He was advised that the search for the right "carrot-and-stick" was valid, and that experimenting to find the correct balance would eventually yield positive results.[71]

As part of the "carrot-and-stick strategy, Johnson's administration established a theme of redirecting military aid to humanitarian uses, and continued it throughout his term. In January 1967 Dean Rusk stated: "We would much prefer to use our resources for the economic reconstruction of Southeast Asia than in war." Many of his press conferences in 1966 and 1967 carried this theme which was communicated to the North Vietnamese in various ways--but to no avail.[72]

President Johnson left office with the war raging and no peace in sight. His strategy to subdue Ho Chi Minh had failed because Johnson did not understand the goals, commitment and abilities of his enemy. He relied on his own experiences rather than "getting into the head" of the enemy to see why his strategy wasn't working. Further, North Vietnam was winning the war of attrition because they were willing to sacrifice constant military defeat in the South, were willing to sustain incredibly high casualty rates and were receiving

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[71]W. W. Rostow, "Memo to President Johnson. Top Secret - Eyes only." Declassified, November 17, 1966. See Appendix C.

[72]Neihaus, 4.

enough Soviet and Chinese aid to replace their losses.

In 1969, Johnson was replaced by Nixon with Henry Kissinger as his chief aide. Nixon was elected on the promise of getting America out of Vietnam honorably, the course of action desired by the American people, yet he and Kissinger continued making serious mistakes over the next five years.

CHAPTER THREE

President Nixon continued pledging reconstruction aid to both Vietnams, including aid for regional development projects. When he addressed the United Nation's General Assembly on September 18, 1969, he stated: "When the war ends, the United States will stand ready to help the people of Vietnam--all of them--in their task of renewal and reconstruction."[73] This commitment extended the "carrot-and-stick" strategy of the Johnson administration, although Nixon changed the actual goal of this strategy. Whereas Johnson used the strategy to stop North Vietnamese aggression, Nixon was using it to buy time for his "Vietnamization" program to become effective. The goal of his program was to raise South Vietnamese (GVN) military capability to the point where U.S. forces were no longer needed. The Vietnamization program allowed the Americans to gradually withdraw as they trained GVN forces to perform the tasks they had done. The U.S. also left equipment behind for the Vietnamese to accomplish this mission.

Nixon kept the promise of reconstruction aid alive throughout his Presidency, stating publicly (and privately to the Communists through Kissinger at the Paris Peace talks)

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[73]Neihaus, 6.

what he was prepared to give, an amount that gradually grew. Nixon's statements in 1973 differ little from those of 1969. For example, during his radio and television address on January 25, 1972 he said: "We remain prepared to undertake a major reconstruction program throughout Indochina, including North Vietnam, to help all these people recover from the ravages of war.[74]

The amount of promised aid had more than doubled since Johnson's initial pledge of one billion in 1965. By 1972 Kissinger was using the phrase "several billion dollars," and Secretary of State, William Rogers also referred to this amount in his public statements. Nixon stated the Indochina aid program was now "a massive seven and a half billion dollars" to be invested over five years, "in which North Vietnam could share up to $2.5 billion."[75]

The same pattern of frustration affected the Nixon administration that had plagued the Johnson administration. Nixon employed the old "carrot-and-stick" approach, continuing to bomb the Communist strongholds in South Vietnam, along the Ho Chi Minh trail and in the North, while at the same time escalating the amount of aid pledges, and trying to encourage the North to come to terms. Nixon and his aides thought they

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[74]Ibid., 6.

[75]Ibid., 7.

could succeed where Johnson had not, much like Eisenhower and Dulles believed they could succeed where the French had failed. Both France and the U.S. underestimated the Communists, and paid an awful price for that error. Had Nixon learned from past mistakes, he could have brought the U.S. forces home in 1969, maintaining only a supply line to the GVN of whatever war materials they needed. He would have prevented another 26,000 American military deaths, many more wounded and an additional one million Asian casualties.[76]

Kissinger made a valid point regarding the materialistic way Americans view history and why successive American administrations thought they could employ the aid and bombing tactic successfully. In America, economic considerations often dominate domestic and foreign policy. Both the Johnson and Nixon administrations sincerely believed they could bribe the Communists into submission with aid promises.[77]

The Johnson and Nixon administrations were consistent in the conditional nature of the aid pledges to both the DRV and the GVN. Statements throughout both presidential administrations repeated the expectation that the Southern regime

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[76]Lafeber, 605 and George C. Herring, America's Longest War: The U.S. and Vietnam, 1950-1975 (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1979), 8-20.

[77]Philip Habib, telephone interview by author, April 21, 1992 and Douglas Pike, telephone interview by author, November 20, 1991. These were widely held opinions of various administration officials according to Habib and Pike.

must utilize reconstruction aid within specific parameters. For example, Mekong Project aid was to be used for dams, not for telephone communications equipment in Saigon or for arms. Similarly, aid to North Vietnam would not be given unless Hanoi agreed to cease their war against the South.[78] The U.S. position was consistent throughout the war regarding the DRV: reconstruction aid would be forthcoming to the North Vietnamese, and in the several billion dollar range, but peace would be the prerequisite. However, as a result of a secret letter that Nixon sent to North Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Van Dong, controversy developed. Statements made at home publicly, by Nixon and his officials, were not consistent with the contents of this secret letter, which contributed to DRV acceptance of the Paris Accords in early 1973.

THE NIXON LETTER

Throughout Nixon's term in office, his principal negotiators (Kissinger and staff), had been meeting with DRV counterparts in Paris. At first these meetings were held in secret, and then later publicly, with both teams attempting to negotiate an end to the war on mutually agreeable terms. The principal negotiator from the DRV was Le Duc Tho, a veteran of

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[78]Neihaus, 2-10. Numerous examples from officials in both administrations are documented.

the Viet Minh War. He was personally committed to avoiding the mistakes and the sellout which the Communist Vietnamese felt they had endured at Geneva in 1954. Tho was committed to negotiating an agreement which would allow his forces to retain all the land they occupied when the ceasefire took effect.

After 1968 when the Communist Tet offensive undermined American public support for the war, the Communist bargaining position was much stronger. Up until then, the Communists had fought the U.S. to a stalemate, but had still not been able to unify the country. Their Tet campaign had been a military disaster, but because it was so intense, and vividly displayed to Americans at home, many Americans changed their minds and began to welcome America's withdrawal from the war. Nixon's promise to get out of the war had been instrumental in his 1968 election win and contributed to his Vietnamization policies. But by January 1969, America had lost 25,000 men in the war, and Nixon did not want these casualties to be in vain.

As the anti-war efforts intensified in America, and the American draw-down proceeded in Vietnam, the Communists knew their long-term goals were crystallizing. Soon South Vietnamese troops would be alone in their opposition to the Communists. The Southern regime was far weaker in terms of commitment to its cause, and they were definitely weaker

organizationally. An American reentry into the war was becoming less likely by the day.

It was within this context that the Paris meetings occurred, contributing to the frustrations experienced by Kissinger and his team. As the years went by, the American negotiators had less military leverage (except the intensive bombing program), and tried to compensate by raising the aid pledges.

By late 1972 the text of the Paris agreement was largely settled, but when the Communists began waffling on their commitment to the agreement, President Nixon ordered the "Christmas" bombing campaign, one of the most intensive of the war. This move seemed to work, because the Paris Agreement was signed in January 1973. President Nixon then sent a secret letter on February 1, 1973, four days after the Paris Agreement was signed. Given the years of precedent establishing the conditional nature of any U.S. aid to be given to North Vietnam, the Nixon letter to Pham Van Dong is both puzzling and controversial.

Many scholars agreed the letter represented a codicil to the Paris agreement, and took the form of a cabled message passed between the U.S. and DRV negotiating teams in Paris.[79]

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[79]Gareth Porter, telephone interview by author, May 14, 1992 and H. Bruce Franklin, telephone interview by author, April 22, 1992.

It came about as a result of negotiations between Kissinger and Tho, given "in exchange for a list of American prisoners held in Laos." In effect the U.S. was giving the DRV a letter of commitment in exchange for a POW list. This exchange was originally scheduled for January 30, 1973, but when Hanoi failed to produce a list, Kissinger ordered the U.S. negotiating team to hold Nixon's letter. This U.S. action "produced immediate results" and the exchange took place on February 1.[80]

Included in the body of the Paris Agreement was language regarding reconstruction aid for North Vietnam. The relevant section was Chapter 8, Article 21, the text of which is as follows:

> The United States anticipates that this agreement will usher in an era of reconciliation with the Democratic Republic of Vietnam as with all the peoples of Indochina. In pursuance of its traditional policy, the United States will contribute to healing the wounds of war and to postwar reconstruction of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and throughout Indochina.[81]

President Nixon's letter addressed this pledge by clarifying the dollar amount of the U.S. "contribution" to reconstructing the DRV. He used the figure of $3.25 billion

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[80]Kissinger, 39-40.

[81]United States House of Representatives Select Committee on Missing Persons in Southeast Asia, Americans Missing in Southeast Asia, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, December 13, 1976), 111. (The Paris Agreement is formally called "Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring the Peace in Vietnam, January 27, 1973.)

in "grant aid over five years."[82] The specific amount is not controversial, representing the end of a long series of figures which had been escalating for eight years. What is pointedly controversial is the language used in the letter: "The government of the United States of America will contribute to post war reconstruction in North Vietnam without any political consideration."(emphasis mine) This represents a complete reversal of U.S. policy establishing the conditional nature of any aid disbursements. In addition, this letter was truly a secret document, not just a confidential communication between heads of state (which is normal and expected). It was so secret that its existence was kept hidden from members of a Congressional committee journeying to Hanoi for diplomatic discussions in December of 1975. When in Hanoi, DRV officials revealed Nixon's letter, asking the U.S. delegation to explain why the aid had not been given as pledged. Upon return to Washington, access to the U.S. copy of this letter was denied to Representative Sonny V. Montgomery (D-Mississippi) when he requested it during subsequent hearings in 1976.[83] Undersecretary of State,

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[82]See President Nixon's letter in Appendix B and Herring, 254. Herring claimed the amount of Nixon's pledge was $4.75 billion, but Nixon's letter is specific, mentioning $3.25 billion.

[83]House Select Committee Report, 115-116. Representative Montgomery telephoned President Nixon on February 2, 1976 and received assurance on the nonbinding nature of the letter's

Philip Habib, was questioned by the Committee, but he denied any knowledge of the secret letter. Committee members had met with Habib and Kissinger before the trip in an attempt to avoid the kind of embarrassing revelation that the letter subsequently caused.[84]

What was the origin of the specific wording of the Nixon letter? Kissinger states that the text of the Paris agreement was the result of "weeks of weary haggling."[85] How much of this haggling applied to Nixon's codicil letter is not known for certain, but scholar Gareth Porter claimed the $3.25 billion figure used by Nixon was the result of Kissinger's last meeting with Tho, and that "the specific wording of [the letter] was negotiated during the final session prior to initiating the [Paris] agreement."[86]

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contents. President Nixon told Montgomery that aid was "contingent upon Vietnamese compliance with the Paris Peace Agreement and Congressional approval."

[84]See Appendix B for partial transcript of the testimony of Undersecretary of State Philip Habib denying any knowledge of the secret pledge. (In all fairness to Habib, in my interview with him and in other interviews with former members of the Congressional Delegation who first learned of President Nixon's letter, Habib's reputation was extremely good and he is remembered as an honest, able and dedicated diplomat.)

[85]Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, 39.

[86]Gareth Porter, Untitled paper. (Unpublished), 6. Mr. Porter sent me his research paper after he made similar statements in a telephone interview on May 14, 1992. Additionally, his paper footnotes an interview he conducted with George Aldrich, Dr. Kissinger's legal advisor during the Paris talks, on January 3, 1976. Porter further details the

A problem exists with the phrase "without political conditions" because, if this pledge was forthright, it would be odd to expect the North Vietnamese to accept the subsequent U.S. position that the pledges in the President's letter were conditional (even though this had been an historically consistent U.S. position). Perhaps the word "political" meant something different to Kissinger and Nixon, as opposed to Tho and the Communist negotiating team, but it is hard to imagine the two sides not discussing the implications of such an important word.

It is clear from the surprise of the U.S. Congressional Committee visiting Hanoi, and from Representative Montgomery's subsequent attempts to obtain information about Nixon's letter, that Congressional leaders didn't know of Nixon's financial commitments. Nixon went out on a limb pledging funds for a program he hadn't previously cleared with Congressional leaders. Certainly the committee members who traveled to Hanoi had no knowledge of the letter's commitments.[87] Nixon may have felt he covered himself

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negotiation and implementation of Article 21 in his article in The Nation, "The Broken Promise to Hanoi", April 30, 1977, 519-521.

[87]Telephone interviews with two Congressmen: former Representative Paul (Pete) McCloskey, Jr. on May 5, 1992, and former Representative Richard L. Ottenger on May 5, 1992, as well as telephone interviews with Mr. J. Angus MacDonald, former Staff Director for Rep. Montgomery, May 7, 1992 (Mr. MacDonald remained in Washington, D.C. and did not accompany

adequately (plausible deniability) by the inclusion in his letter of the statement that arrangements "will be implemented by each member according to its own constitutional provisions."[88]

Having become aware that Nixon had made written commitments which were arguably unconditional, did the United States incur an obligation to pay up, even though the President hadn't abided by internal U.S. procedures? Further, should there be a distinction between legal obligations and moral/ethical ones? Since by U.S. law only Congress can authorize the appropriation and distribution of federal funds, the President had no legal authority to make such pledges binding, hence any commitments he made in the letter were invalid. However, since the President had pledged the funds as America's leader, and included language that the economic package was subject to U.S. "constitutional provision," perhaps the Congress should have viewed the issue as ethically binding because U.S. integrity was on the line. Certainly Congress had been put in a very awkward spot by the secrecy

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the delegation to Hanoi) and Dr. Henry J. (Hank) Kenny, Delegation Translator and professional Staff Assistant - May 8, 1992. Two consistent revelations came from these interviews. The first was each person's surprise at having this letter revealed to them, and the second was their belief that Habib was a man of great integrity and that his denial of prior knowledge of President Nixon's letter was indeed the truth.

[88]See Appendix B.

Nixon employed.[89]

Another aspect of the moral argument concerns whether the U.S. incurred an obligation to reconstruct North Vietnam because the U.S. caused the damage in the first place. The Communists believed so, as did many in the U.S. anti-war movement.[90] However, Johnson and Nixon had viewed the promise of aid as leverage to bring peace under their terms. As Kissinger described it, the aid was a "voluntary act," not an "obligation," to indemnify Hanoi, although he admitted that this distinction might be "hair splitting."[91] At any rate, the whole issue was buried under the cloud of confusion that characterized the end of the Vietnam War. Unlike the situation in the post World War II period where the U.S., as a decisive, benevolent victor, sponsored the Marshall Plan for Europe, the Communist takeover of the South put the U.S. in the distinctly different position of defeat, because its ally folded.

Throughout the post Paris Agreement period, before and after the fall of Saigon in April 1975, Kissinger kept to the line that the U.S. was not obligated under a binding agreement to give the DRV aid. His advisor, George Aldrich commented:

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[89]See Appendix A.

[90]Porter, The Nation, 519-521 and Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, 39.

[91]Ibid., 39.

"We never interpreted anything in writing as a commitment to give aid."[92] But his comment was in the context, of Article 21 of the Paris Agreement. In contrast, the secret Nixon codicil letter provides a different context, and Aldrich commented that he warned Kissinger that he was on weak ground in claiming that the letter didn't constitute a commitment. Aldrich stated: "I felt the language was excessive and I told him so . . . I told [Kissinger] that [he] undercut the argument that Article 21 was not a commitment by having an interpretative letter."[93]

Later Kissinger was to claim in volume one of his memoirs that the gap of the three days between the signing of the agreement and the Nixon letter "underlined the fact that it was voluntary and distinct from the formal obligations of the agreement."[94] But Porter argues with reasonable logic against this, pointing out that it was a more concrete expression of Article 21.

Kissinger's argument once again raises the question of how the Communists were interpreting the pledges of Article 21 and the codicil letter from Nixon. Since the DRV negotiating team and government officials would be expected to regard the

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[92]Porter, Untitled paper, 9.

[93]Ibid., 9.

[94]Kissinger, Years of Upheaval, 39.

written commitments as legally binding, and since both Nixon and Kissinger knew they didn't have Congressional commitment, can the secret letter be construed as deceptive?[95]

What would be the motive to justify deception? Possibly that Nixon knew his letter was the only way to get the treaty signed, get the U.S. POW's out, and get the remaining U.S. military forces out of South Vietnam. However, this is a weak argument, as the Peace Treaty was already signed, and the U.S. forces wouldn't have been removed if the POW's were not released. Nixon obviously knew his own position with Congress, and probably hoped later negotiations would produce mutually beneficial results for the Americans, GVN and DRV.[96]

Thus controversy surrounded Nixon's letter even after he left office, such as when Rep. Montgomery's Committee tried to obtain and analyze the letter in 1976. Other controversies also surrounded the reconstruction aid issue, both during the cease fire period, and after the fall of Saigon (February 1973

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[95]Public Information Series, Bureau of Public Affairs. U.S. Aid to North Vietnam, September 28, 1973, 426. A few months after the Paris Agreement was signed, the State Department speculated in this bulletin on why Hanoi had rejected the aid packages offered for years - going back to President Johnson's offer in April of 1965. Hanoi saw these offers as declining U.S. resolve to continue the war. If so, then the offers backfired and prolonged the war. The U.S. thought they were showing mercy, while the Communists saw only weakness.

[96]Letters were written to both Nixon and Kissinger requesting details on Nixon's letter, but no reply was received.

- April 1975). Some of these additional controversies will be examined in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR

The possibility exists that the DRV withheld some American POWs or their remains because they did not receive the funds pledged in the Nixon letter. There are discrepancies between the public and private statements of Communist officials regarding this connection, and the U.S. Congress was examining this issue long after the Paris Agreement was nullified by the fall of Saigon.

The Paris Agreement had made provision for POW or MIA accounting, as stated in Article 8b:

> The parties shall help each other to get information about those military personal and foreign civilians of the parties missing in action, to determine the location and take care of the graves of the dead so as to facilitate the exhumation and repatriation of the remains, and to take any such other measures as may be required to get information about those still considered missing in action.[97]

Further, Article 16 established the Four Part Joint Military Commission (FPJMC) as the mechanism to implement Article 8b. The FPJMC was given the task of investigating cease fire violations and facilitating POW exchanges, and began a sixty day operation as soon as the Paris Agreement was signed (January 27, 1973). During this sixty day period most of the POW exchanges were to have been completed, as well as the withdrawal of American troops from South Vietnam. After this

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[97]House Select Committee Report, 109.

sixty days period, any remaining mission requirements were to have been completed by the FPJMC team. This period became known as the time of the "War of the Flags," because of the four flags represented by the four parties of the FPJMC. Included were North and South Vietnam, the United States and the NLF (Viet Cong). The term "war" was used because the South Vietnamese and the Communists fought daily to grasp and hold as much territory as possible, because the cease fire allowances permitted forces to "remain in place" in all controlled territory.[98]

Representative Montgomery's House Select Committee included in its report recognition of the difference of opinion which arose on whether the POW issue was separate from the pledged reconstruction aid issue, noting:

> The text of the Agreement gives no indication at all that Article 8 was to be considered separate from other articles, as Dr. Kissinger suggested later, or that its implementation was linked with any other particular article as the (Communist) Vietnamese later linked it to Article 21.[99]

Undersecretary of State Habib is quoted as stating to the House Select Committee that the Paris negotiations did not conclude with the signing of the Agreement in January 1973: "In a sense, the Paris negotiations continued through 1973 and

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[98]Ibid., 109. LTC (Ret.) Tom Griffin, Ph.D., Ed.D. Member of the Four Part Joint Military Commission, interview by author. Monterey, California, June 12, 1992.

[99]Ibid., 110.

into 1974, and a major part of our exchanges concerned MIA accounting."[100]

Written in 1976, the House Select Committee Report stated that:

> The failure of the United States to implement Article 21 [reconstruction aid] . . . has, of late, become the reason cited by the North Vietnamese for their own refusal to implement Article 8b of the Paris Agreement . . . it is interesting to observe that the [Communist] Vietnamese did not use this argument during 1973, 1974 or 1975 at any of the FPJMT discussions at Camp Davis near Saigon.[101]

The House Select Committee researched this period of U.S./DRV discussions and concluded "it was evident that . . . [the Communists] had gathered information on missing Americans and were withholding it."[102] The Committee determined that the Communists did not link Article 21 to Article 8b until they overran the South in April 1975, in "gross violation" of the Paris Agreement.[103]

Finding no specific linkage between Article 8b and 21 of the Paris Agreement, or between the Joint Economic Commission and FPJMC, the Committee reported:

> In the final analysis the conflicts that brought about the collapse of both mechanisms (JEC and FPJMT) were only the symptoms of an underlying, central conflict--North

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[100]Ibid., 118.

[101]Ibid., 119.

[102]Ibid., 119.

[103]Ibid., 119.

Vietnamese determination to reunify Vietnam, the Paris Peace Agreement not withstanding.[104]

In an attempt to shed light on various aspects of the "POWs for aid" controversy, several interviews are presented here. From the signing of the Paris agreement until the present (fall 1992), questions regarding the fate of some 2,200 U.S. MIAS has been active in American society. The families of the missing have joined together, forming a lobby to keep the nation aware of their concerns, as well as members of the legislative and executive branches of the U.S. government.

There are various perspectives on this issue, one of which was provided by LTC (Ret) Tom Griffin who was part of the FPJMC. He spoke Vietnamese, served three combat tours in Kontom Province in Vietnam, and was briefly a POW himself. (Because his capture was brief and he was able to escape, his status was "detainee" not POW.) His mission covered the 60 day period following the Paris Agreement, and consisted of investigating cease fire violations and facilitating POW exchanges. During his two month mission in the Central Highlands, he was privileged to receive four U.S. POWs back from Communist captivity.

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[104]Ibid., 119-120. Provision for the Joint Economic Commission was included in Nixon's letter to Pham Van Dong. It would handle the specifics of implementing the monetary pledge contained in the letter. It will be discussed in the next section.

Asked specifically if any Communist officials he encountered mentioned the "POWs for aid" issue, he said clearly "no." He further stated that he did not hear even rumors of this during that period.[105]

Another perspective was provided by a former Vietnamese national, now an American citizen working for the FBI. This person was the child of one of the most senior leaders of the National Liberation Front, who came from South Vietnam. The father had been recruited into the Communist movement in the 1930's while residing in the South, and was jailed during World War II by the Japanese. He later served in the diplomatic community representing the NLF in the Soviet Union, and is now deceased.

In spite of the father's dedication to Communism, his children grew up to be strict anti-Communists. Estranged from the father for some years, the person I interviewed met with the father in Paris in June of 1975. Here, during their reunion, the father relayed information, (which was confirmed by other senior Communist officials who were present at the time), that U.S. POWs were still in Communist hands, to be used as "bargaining chips" in future negotiations to obtain aid from the U.S. government.

Upon return to the U.S. from Paris, the story was relayed

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[105]Tom Griffin, interview previously cited.

to U.S. federal government officials who said that the matter would be investigated, but no further word has been received by the interviewee to this day. In answer to the question of the status of these POWs in 1992, the source expressed only a personal opinion that they were no doubt all dead.[106]

A different view is that of scholar H. Bruce Franklin who makes the case (regarding the accounting of the POWs and MIAs) that the MIAs are all deceased, most of them listed in an official post-war government category called, "killed in action, body not found." He stressed that treating these known dead in the same manner as the relatively small number of "discrepancy" cases (where the men were initially believed alive, but not released in 1973), was done for political reasons. Among these reasons were keeping U.S. antagonism toward the Communist Vietnamese alive in hope of an eventual return of GVN leaders to reclaim South Vietnam, and to maintain the salaries of MIA servicemen on the active list, so their families would receive continuing military pay. If the men were officially removed from the MIA status, these payments would cease.[107]

Throughout the period following the fall of Saigon, the

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[106] Confidential interview due to the fact that the interviewee feared possible reprisals against family members still living in Vietnam. May 1992.

[107] F. Bruce Franklin, MIA or Mythmaking in America, (Brooklyn, New York: Lawrence Hill Books, 1992), 137.

official Communist Vietnamese position has been that they have no live POWs. They have admitted having remains, and have doled these out continually for years, but have been adamant that no Americans are still alive in Vietnam. During a 1978 interview between the Swedish Prime Minister Olaf Palme and Pham Van Dong on the subject of U.S. Pow's, the Communist leader made an uncharacteristic reference to deity when he said, "As God is my witness, we don't have any POWs".[108]

Since 1986, senior American representatives have traveled to Vietnam to discuss resolution of this issue, particularly of the nearly 200 cases of MIAs who fall into the "discrepancy" category--cases where the U.S. government believes significant evidence exists that the men were alive after parachuting out of airplanes, that they reached the ground safely, or were known to have been captured alive.

During the summer of 1992 several members of the Senate Committee studying this issue traveled to Vietnam, and in September they held a hearing to investigate POW/MIA issues, calling such notables as Kissinger to testify.

Resolution of this issue has been linked to reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Vietnam and the U.S. The openness the Vietnamese government has shown to U.S. MIA

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[108]Douglas Pike, telephone interview by author, May 25, 1992. Mr. Pike related this historical anecdote obtained from the U.S. Ambassador to Stockholm who had spoken with the Swedish Ambassador to Hanoi.

resolution teams in Vietnam during the last two years (1990-1992) is one reason the U.S. government has allowed some humanitarian aid to be sent to Vietnam.[109]

Recently, the Vietnamese foreign minister traveled to Washington and was confronted with proof that some 4,000 photographs taken through the war years of U.S. servicemen (dead and alive) exist in an archive in Vietnam. The minister admitted that the photographs do exist and has agreed to turn them over to U.S. authorities. Although the contents of the photographs is not known, there is hope that these pictures will help to resolve many MIA cases.[110]

My personal assessment is that a few men were left behind in POW status, some possibly held by the Vietnamese, and perhaps some by Laotian tribal chieftains. More than likely they were held in small numbers--perhaps four or five in each case. Further, because of the time lapse since their capture, harsh prison conditions, and official Communist policy that they didn't exist, it would seem probable to assume that any remaining POWs would have been quietly killed years ago.

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[109]State Department spokesman telephone interview by author, August 10, 1992.

[110]Douglas Pike, telephone interview by author, October 16, 1992.

JOINT ECONOMIC COMMISSION

Another controversial aspect of trying to implement the Paris Agreement and Nixon pledges during the War of the Flags, was the establishment of the Joint Economic Commission (JEC). The JEC was announced by a joint U.S./DRV communique on February 14, 1973. Agreed to secretly by both parties, it was one of the proposals contained in President Nixon's letter of February 1, 1973. The JEC was to work out the details of Article 21 of the Paris Agreement, which had been quite general in language, and began meeting that March.[111]

From the beginning, the JEC was plagued with controversy, with the Nixon Administration trying to assure Congress that no specific dollar figures had been negotiated, and that it would be involved in the negotiations. During his news conference of January 24, 1973, Kissinger responded to a question regarding the dollar amount of reconstruction aid pledged to North Vietnam:

> We will discuss the issue of economic reconstruction of all Indochina, including North Vietnam, only after the signature of the agreements and after the implementation is well advanced, and the definition of any particular sum will have to wait the discussions which will take place after the agreements are in force.

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[111]See Appendix A.

To another question he responded: "There are no secret understandings."[112]

On January 28, 1973, Senator Michael J. Mansfield (D-Montana) was assured by Kissinger that there had been no negotiations or agreements on possible aid to North Vietnam. Mansfield quoted Kissinger in a news conference: "Before anything about this is done, Congress will be consulted."[113] With our present knowledge of the Nixon letter, this appears to be an outright lie.

President Nixon seemed to add to this deception during his News Conference of January 31, 1973. He stated that the reconstruction aid figure still had "to be negotiated" and "first be discussed with (Congressional) bipartisan leadership."[114] Many similar statements were made by administration officials and widely reported.[115] The House Select Committee Report contained the following summary: "In the public statements of Administration officials, aid was still considered conditional. Reconstruction aid depended on the observance of the cease fire agreements and on

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[112]Taped News Conference of Dr. Henry Kissinger, January 24, 1973, contained in U.S. Department of State Information Services, "Peace with Honor." (Hollywood, California: Center for Cassette Studies, 1973).

[113]Neihaus, 11.

[114]Ibid., 11.

[115]Ibid., 9-10.

Congressional approval."[116]

Kissinger also told the House Select Committee on March 12, 1976 that no unconditional commitments had been made in the JEC discussions. He said "the figures discussed in the JEC meetings were planning figures only . . . (also discussed) were the constitutional procedures that would be necessary to provide aid."[117]

Both sides of the JEC reached agreement on the "principles and procedures of aid," but the talks were suspended on April 17 over charges that North Vietnam was violating the terms of the Paris Agreement cease fire.[118]

CAMBODIA LINKED TO RECONSTRUCTION AID

The last part of this chapter will examine controversial attempts by Kissinger to link a Cambodian cease fire with the provision of U.S. reconstruction aid to the DRV.

Throughout the Paris negotiations, Kissinger had tried to push Tho for a cease fire in Cambodia. He warned the Communists that Congress might not approve the reconstruction aid package if the Cambodian situation remained unsolved.

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[116]House Select Committee Report, 114.

[117]Ibid., 115.

[118]Ibid., 117.

Kissinger's mistake was in making the assumption that Hanoi had significant control over the Khmer Rouge.[119] In light of Nixon's secret letter, which promised aid without political considerations, Kissinger's warning was without real substance.[120]

The problem in Cambodia had been growing for the Nixon Administration throughout the war. The Lon Nol government was seen as moderate by the President, and his Administration's policy had been to give Lon Nol support. Additionally, because Cambodia was a sanctuary for NVA and VC forces fighting against the South Vietnamese and U.S. forces, (and also contained part of the famous Ho Chi Minh trail), the U.S. had conducted military ground operations and regular bombing in Cambodia. Nixon and Kissinger had also been tracking the growing success of the Cambodian Communist movement (the Khmer Rouge) and its increasing success against Lon Nol's regime. Porter says: "The Nixon-Kissinger strategy for turning back the offensive and saving Lon Nol was to combine the threat of renewed bombing against North Vietnam with the inducement of post war aid."[121] Once again the "carrot and stick" strategy was advocated by the Nixon Administration.

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[119]Douglas Pike, telephone interview by author, June 20, 1992.

[120]Porter, The Nation, 519.

[121]Porter, The Nation, 520.

The JEC talks had been suspended on April 19, 1973, but at the end of that month Kissinger requested new negotiations at the Ambassadorial level. Ambassador William Sullivan first met with DRV Deputy Foreign Minister Nguyen Co Thach and later Kissinger himself met again with Le Duc Tho. The Communists wanted both South Vietnamese compliance with the cease fire agreement, and the U.S. aid package negotiated in the JEC talks.[122] The U.S. wanted "the condition that Hanoi agree to take responsibility for a cease fire in Cambodia."[123] A key problem was that neither side had much control over their respective principal allies. North Vietnam and Cambodia had different agendas, and disputes over DRV arms shipments to the Khmer Rouge even escalated into fire fights in Cambodia. The U.S. repeatedly tried to get the Thieu government to comply with the Paris Agreement, but the South Vietnamese forces were systematically conquering Viet Cong-controlled villages in South Vietnam in the two party land grab.[124]

Porter contends that the new round of talks centered on the U.S. demand for linkage of the Cambodian issue to any forthcoming U.S. aid. He quotes an unnamed negotiator at these meetings as saying, "We demanded a cease fire in

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[122]See Appendix D for Joint Economic Commission Aid List.

[123]Porter, The Nation, 520.

[124]Douglas Pike, telephone interview by author, June 26, 1992.

Cambodia as the price of economic aid. We told them we wouldn't be prepared to go to Congress with an agreement unless they came through with it."[125] This same source said the DRV negotiators wanted to comply with U.S. demands: "They would say quite earnestly that they would do everything possible, but they couldn't commit themselves to a settlement." Finally, the two sides agreed that each would do its best on Cambodia without a formal agreement.

The JEC talks were then rescheduled, and given two weeks to complete negotiations on a first year aid package.[126] By late June a "Principles and Modalities" document was completed, and the negotiators were ready to prepare the request for specific needs to submit to the U.S. Congress.

By June 21, the agreement was nearly complete and Kissinger ordered U.S. Delegation Chief Maurice Williams to get the best U.S. position, but then wait for further word before signing the document.[127] For some unknown reason, possibly because the Congressional attitude was deemed cool toward any benefits toward the DRV, Kissinger ordered the U.S. delegation home. A joint statement was issued and the talks

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[125]Porter, The Nation, 520.

[126]House Select Committee Report, 149.

[127]Porter, The Nation, 521.

were temporarily suspended, although the JEC never met again.[128]

The House Select Committee investigating the flow of events through his period regarding the POW/MIA issue also studied the JEC. They did not mention any Cambodian linkage, rather the key issue was the disagreement over cease fire violations in South Vietnam.[129]

Kissinger tried to link the Cambodian situation with reconstruction aid but failed. The Khmer Rouge were a maverick group and the situation continued to deteriorate through the period of Pol Pot's control over Cambodia, and the horror of the "killing fields" period of the mid-1970s.

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[128]Ibid., 521 and House Select Committee Report, 119.

[129]Ibid., 119.

CHAPTER FIVE

Following the return of U.S. POWs in February and March, 1973, Congress was less enthusiastic about implementing an aid package to Hanoi. Not only were the pressures of war removed, but there was a similar desire to shift to a peacetime focus as previously exhibited after World War I and World War II. The American public also had to deal with an unknown quantity: a nebulous end to a controversial war, even more uncertain than the conclusion of the Korean conflict. Without victory, American public opinion was hostile to giving aid, a much different atmosphere than after World War II when victory was overwhelming, and aid was represented as necessary to contain Communism.

Nixon administration officials were now contending with the question of which funding sources they should tap to pay for possible reconstruction aid. Secretary of State Rogers testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, refusing "to rule out the possibility of diverting funds for postwar North Vietnamese reconstruction from (Pentagon) sources."[130]

President Nixon expanded this theme on March 2, 1973:

As far as any assistance program is concerned, it will be

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[130]Washington Post. February 22, 1973. Rogers testimony. Previously cited.

> covered by the existing levels for the budget which we have in for national security purposes. It will not come out of the domestic side of the budget.[131]

On March 5th, 1973, Defense Secretary Elliot Richardson addressed this issue and said that if the ceasefire in Vietnam was observed, then $2.9 billion of the Pentagon budget for Southeast Asia would be diverted, with the approval of Congress, to pay for economic aid to Hanoi.[132]

These statements reveal only a general plan to obtain funding sources, but this theme of shifting funds from hostile to peaceful use (from the Pentagon to foreign aid) was consistent with what President Johnson had said in 1965.

The Congressional mood was negative toward extending aid to Vietnam (even to South Vietnam during the "War of the Flags.) Ambassador Habib said he and General Fredrick C. Weyand, U.S. Army Chief of Staff, were "up on the hill day after day, . . . but Congress was not willing to extend aid." He said that Congress was affected by "long-simmering disillusionment with the war." After all the years of being asked for money, the well had run dry. Habib said this Congressional attitude was a key factor in shutting off aid: "We're out of this thing . . . we don't care what happens. (Congress) wanted to forget it. That kind of mood was

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[131]Presidential News Conference, March 2, 1973.

[132]Niehaus, 16.

prevalent in Congress in 1974 and 1975."[133]

Further, a shift in world view had taken place in Congress, and, for that matter, in America as a whole, from the mid 1960's to the mid 1970's; from the Kennedy/Johnson years to those of Nixon/Ford. Habib commented that early U.S. Vietnam policy was consistent with other American foreign policy during the 1960's:

> The disillusionment didn't come until the whole country turned sour on the war because of the ineffectiveness of what we were doing. It went on too long, we weren't winning, and we had this television horror show night after night after night on the news."[134]

The national mood regarding the war had gradually changed from broad based support, to mild support, to tolerance (with a significant part of the country strongly opposed). As the revelations emerged regarding the harsh treatment endured by our returning POWs, there was little support for aid to Hanoi. As President Nixon had lost political leverage as the Watergate scandal unfolded, so his successor, President Ford, inherited a losing cause regarding reconstruction aid. It is not surprising that Kissinger felt there was little hope of obtaining funds for North Vietnam.[135]

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[133]Larry Englemann, "A Lot of People Lost Their Lives for Nothing." Philip Habib's reflections on the Vietnam War. Vietnam, April 1992.

[134]Ibid., 11-12.

[135]Ibid., 18.

Habib admitted that from 1968 onward he felt the best the U.S. could achieve was an independent South Vietnam, one in which certain compromises would be made between the Viet Cong and the South Vietnamese government. He felt the North Vietnamese would go along with this compromise, if the U.S. would withdraw its troops.[136]

As the "War of the Flags" progressed, any hope the Communists may have had of obtaining U.S. aid was diminishing. They could see the tremendous mood shift in the U.S., and it worked both for and against them: for them in the sense that the U.S. wanted out of South Vietnam and had a sense of urgency in getting out, but against them, in the sense that this same mood shift made any hope of receiving aid from an angry U.S. quite remote. "This situation. . . a Communist commentator called it 'half war and half peace' . . . was almost certain to erupt in renewed fighting."[137] In this situation, where it appeared that both sides were just resting and regrouping while the American's pulled out, is it surprising that the "postwar" aid situation dissolved into charge and counter-charge regarding unfulfilled promises?

When the last of the POWs left Hanoi in March, most of the U.S. news organizations left Vietnam. When President

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[136]Ibid., 16.

[137]Stanley Karnow, Vietnam: A History (New York: Viking Press, 1983), 654.

Nixon "hinted" in a speech that the U.S. would return to Vietnam if the Communists seriously violated the truce, and this threat was enlarged upon by Secretary Richardson, both Houses of Congress passed bills in June of 1974 to block any expenditures of U.S. funds for military activities in Indochina. Nixon and Kissinger successfully lobbied to have the ban postponed until August 15, to enable U.S. bombers to continue strikes into Cambodia (because Cambodia was not part of the Paris Agreement). This maneuvering between the Administration and Congress was largely public and obviously known to the Vietnamese. Add to all of this the worsening of the Watergate Scandal following the damaging testimony of former White House Counsel John Dean, and it was now apparent that Nixon's ability to further use any U.S. military power in Vietnam was over.[138]

During this period, debate in Hanoi intensified. Just as there were different factions within the U.S. and the U.S. Congress which represented differences of opinion on key issues, so were there factions within the Vietnamese Politburo and National Assembly. Some were more moderate (doves), and some more radical (hawks). Debate between these factions continued and intensified during the cease fire period. The principal point of contention was whether to reduce military

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[138]Ibid., 656.

action in the hope of receiving pledged U.S. aid, versus intensifying military action to force unification. The "doves" maintained that the North would be better served by adhering enough to the Paris Agreement to receive U.S. aid, (and thereby rebuild the North, and continue toward their long-term goal of unification by political means). The "hawks" argued that the aid package was not enough inducement to postpone their goal. U.S. aid was perceived as elusive anyway, as Congress became more hesitant, and moreover, the U.S. economy was under strain from the Arab oil embargo triggered by the 1973 Yom Kippur War. This added to American economic problems and made Congress even less inclined to be generous to the North Vietnamese. President Nixon's power to carry out his re-entry threats eroded daily due to domestic difficulties. So the "hawks" advocated a more aggressive course of action.[139] The promises of aid were becoming hollow, at the same time the South was becoming vulnerable.

Another situation existed which made the Communist's decision tricky: they were experiencing a deteriorating relationship with the Soviet Union and China, both of which had to balance any relationship with Vietnam within the context of larger cold war relationships with the U.S. and

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[139]Insights gained from interviews with Douglas Pike.

each other.[140]

In October of 1973, North Vietnamese requests for aid were rejected by both these powers. The Soviets were experiencing their own economic woes, while the Chinese attitude can be surmised as extremely cautious. According to Stanley Karnow, Zhou En Lai, the Chinese Prime Minister, told Phan Van Dong: "It would be best for Vietnam and the rest of Indochina to relax for, say, five or ten years."[141]

Within the Vietnamese Politburo this kind of response heightened the debate on U.S. reconstruction aid. The moderates argued more intensely the need for U.S. funds, so as to continue the reconstruction already underway, while the "hawks" stressed the need to reach their goal of reunification before the chance slipped away.

In March of 1974 an article appeared in China News Analysis a weekly newsletter written in Hong Kong, reflecting how non-Communist Asian perceptions had changed regarding U.S. attitudes toward aiding the North Vietnamese. Speaking of Kissinger's current attitude, the article comments that the U.S. was no longer in the same position to provide aid as it was the previous year. Kissinger is quoted as saying, the "generous" offer was gone, but the "U.S. could provide some

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[140]Douglas Pike, Vietnam and the Soviet Union (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1987).

[141]Karnow, Vietnam: A History, 660.

help." Noting the tremendous shift from Kissinger's earlier suggestion of several billion dollars, this news article attributed the change to a shift in Congressional opinion against aiding the DRV, a shift influenced by DRV violations of the cease fire agreement.[142]

A communique by the U.S. State Department issued in April of 1974 gave an update on the aid issue. It simply stated that there was no change in the status quo. The U.S. was not going to "move forward" with economic assistance for the DRV, and would not until the Communists ceased violating the terms of the Paris Agreement. Principally these violations consisted of moving soldiers and war material to South Vietnam.[143]

Hanoi officials had also been busy issuing statements in 1974. In January they signalled through a French correspondent an openness to "normal" relations with the U.S., if the latter fulfilled certain conditions. This communication was indicated as a first anniversary statement on the Paris Agreement. Foremost among the conditions was the U.S. "obligation" to rebuild North Vietnam, to stop its intervention into the internal affairs of South Vietnam, and

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[142]China News Analysis, #953, Hong Kong, March 15, 1974. (Berkeley: University of California Indochina Archives).

[143]U.S. Department of State Communique. "Aid to North Vietnam." April 1974. (Berkeley: University of California Indochina Archives).

to stop "violating" the rights of the peoples of Cambodia and Laos.[144]

During a DRV radio broadcast in March 1974, reference was made to an alleged American statement admitting the U.S. owed the North Vietnamese a $1 billion dollar aid package. This broadcast referred to a March 14th Reuter's article in which a U.S. spokesman stated the aid would be given "in exchange (by North Vietnam) for the promise not to initiate or support major offensives in South Vietnam, Cambodia or Laos." The DRV broadcast said the real violator of the peace agreement was the United States, which was holding up the aid package by violating its promise to remove military personnel from the South (claiming 23,000 were still there disguised as civilians). The broadcast further alleged that the U.S. had made "false accusations" that the DRV was planning major military offensives against the South and was "distorting" the DRV's good will in returning the remains of 23 U.S. pilots who died while in detention in North Vietnam.[145]

From this message it is clear that Hanoi had greatly re-evaluated its ability to collect the $3.25 billion mentioned in the Nixon letter, now revised down to $1 billion. However,

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[144]Jean Vincent, Agence France Press, Hanoi. January 16, 1974. (Berkeley: University of California Indochina Archives).

[145]Radio North Vietnam, 2230 GMT, March 23, 1974. "The U.S. Cannot Evade It's Heavy Responsibility."

the "dove/hawk" debate within the Politburo was still active, and would remain so though the fall of 1974. Since the fall 1974-spring 1975 military campaign had been planned as a limited campaign, the significant spring victory was quite a surprise to the planners. For this reason, it should not be seen as a previous victory within the Politburo of the "hawks" over the "doves."[146]

Undersecretary of State Habib's analysis reflected his knowledge of the "hawk" view in the Politburo during this period:

> What did the North Vietnamese want? . . . They wanted to take the war to a different phase. They knew that once we were out of it completely, we were never going to come back in. It was a fair bet on their part. And by 1974 they were correct because Nixon was out . . . Ford couldn't get any more money. They saw that. And so by 1974 they knew that they could now go for the Big Casino. So in the fall of 1974 they began the final offensive.[147]

A different tone was reflected in a July 1974 article by Dennis Bloodworth, writing in the Australian magazine, The Bulletin. This article is worth mentioning because the Australians had been allies who participated actively in the Vietnam War, sustaining war casualties. There were many Australians interested in Vietnamese events, and U.S. leaders were likewise interested in Australian opinion. The article

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[146]Douglas Pike, telephone interview by author, October 16, 1992.

[147]Engelmann, 18.

saw signs of a "thaw" in Hanoi's attitude that summer, based on its growing realization that the economy of the North was in shambles, and Sino-Soviet aid was waning. Rice, sugar and cloth were rationed, and Pham Van Dong had "called for large scale sowing of maize" as rice production could never satisfy the needs of the people. The article stated this action reflected a "defeatist" attitude in Dong, which was atypical of this Communist leader. Did this mean that the North Vietnamese were now more open to accepting U.S. aid and would be "less belligerent" to get it?[148]

We can now answer this question with 20/20 hindsight. Only the "doves" within the Politburo could claim to have taken this position. The more aggressive elements in the Politburo had won permission to wage a strategically and tactically limited winter/spring military campaign. Use of the word "limited" is significant because the major offensive was being planned for 1976, which was a U.S. presidential election year. This was an established pattern.[149] The collective Politburo (including the "dove" faction) weighed the advantages of various options, and decided the "rice bowl"

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[148]Dennis Bloodworth, "Peace Demoralizes North Vietnam," The Bulletin, Politics/Asia Section, July 1974, 38 - 39.

[149]Douglas Pike, telephone interview by author, November 21, 1991. Major offensives in 1968 and 1972 had proven that the Communists could affect U.S. politics during a Presidential campaign. Pike had studies documents which confirmed this DRV position. Karnow, 650-670.

of the Mekong Delta was a bigger lure than the promised U.S. aid (especially in light of the agricultural problems in the North as reported in Bloodworth's article). This campaign was risky, but succeeded beyond the planners' expectations. It also sealed the fate of the arguments by the "doves," and the fate of any reconstruction aid that might have come from the U.S.

In August 1974, the North Vietnamese commented on President Nixon's resignation, gloating over their long-time adversary's demise calling him "a politician who dreamed up numerous deceitful and malicious plots and maneuvers."[150] This was a case of the "pot calling the kettle black" as the DRV flooded troops into the South in violation of the Paris Agreement.

The following month, the Quan Doi Nhan Dan, (official military newspaper of North Vietnam), ran an article on Nixon's replacement, Gerald Ford, speculating that the new President would be unable to win the 1976 election, a forecast which proved correct.[151] This is important to note because it reflected the DRV leadership's lack of concern about a potential American reprisal against their aggression.

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[150]Hanoi Radio in Vietnamese, 1115 GMT, August 13, 1974, "Commentary on Nixon's Downfall of 9 August: The U.S. Imperialist's Failure and Stalemate."

[151]Quan Dien Nhan Don. Official Military Newspaper for North Vietnam. September 19, 1974.

Throughout this period the Communists were building their forces in the South and continuing small unit actions, which disrupted South Vietnamese troops and expanded Communist territorial control.

The summer and fall of 1974 were also periods of increasing tension between South Vietnam and the United States. President Thieu had not wanted to support the Paris Agreement because it allowed the Communist forces to hold territory they occupied in South Vietnam. His unhappiness and uneasiness grew as the Nixon Presidency collapsed and the Ford Presidency began. He saw the mood of the U.S. Congress shift away from supporting Vietnam, as well as the American people's waning commitment. Thieu lived with the violations of the Communists and began to see the "handwriting on the wall."[152]

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[152]Hguyen Tien Hung and Jerrod L. Schecter, The Palace File (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1986), 365-437. Karnow, 661-666.

COMMUNIST TIMETABLE

November 1974 proved to be a critical month in Hanoi's timetable. General Tra (Communist Commander in South Vietnam) traveled to Hanoi from his headquarters in Loc Ninh, urging the Politburo to grant him freedom to press attacks in the South, particularly cutting Route 14, sixty miles northwest of Saigon. He encountered both "hawk" support and "dove" resistance to his request, but won the favor of a compromise led by Le Duan. Returning south Tra prepared and led the first of what would be the final assaults against the southern regime. Beginning their military campaign in mid-December, the Communist forces hoisted their flag over Phuoc Binh, the capital of Phuoc-Long Province January 6, 1975.[153]

Le Duc Tho had opposed this time table, but when approved by the majority of his fellow Politburo members, he acquiesced. In early November, just before the offensive began, Tho made one final effort to secure aid from the U.S., knowing it was his last chance, but he did so in a round about manner.[154]

Tho returned to Paris and was invited to address the French Communist Party. While there he accused the U.S. of

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[153]Karnow, 663.

[154]Ibid., 663.

"attaching unacceptable political conditions" to the talks, saying "North Vietnam would not re-enter the talks until the U.S. renounced neo-colonialism . . . and military engagements in South Vietnam." Tho also demanded the U.S. provide the aid to North Vietnam it owed by "moral obligation."[155]

This last gasp effort seems futile in light of the tone he used. It may have reflected the continued inability of the North Vietnamese to believe that the U.S. Congress really did have to authorize any aid payments, a process which would take more than the two weeks Tho had before General Tra began the offensive. It also may have been a ruse to throw off the U.S., although this is questionable since Tho didn't know how successful their offensive would be.

On December 7th, the anniversary of Pearl Harbor, Hanoi made its last pre-offensive demand for U.S. aid, saying the United States should "seriously fulfill its duty of providing economic aid for repairing war damage."[156] This statement came on the heels of Kissinger's testimony before the U.S. Senate Finance Committee where he stated that aid for North Vietnam was no longer planned: "We are not pursuing this and don't expect to pursue it in any future I can see." His

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[155]New York Times, November 28, 1974. (Berkeley: University of California Indochina Archives).

[156]Arnold R. Isaacs, "Hanoi Bids U.S. Act on War Damage." Baltimore Sun, December 7, 1974.

stated reason for the change in the U.S. aid position was the repeated violation of the Paris Agreement by the North Vietnamese.[157] Since this Communist demand was so obviously a futile act, both in timing and language, perhaps it was a smoke-screen to throw Saigon's defenses off or to lull them into a false sense of security, just prior to the Communist offensive.

On Christmas Day, the Washington Post reported separate but similar messages issued by the Viet Cong and DRV. These messages stated that the Communist government was no longer going to search for American MIAs. It blamed the U.S. for reneging on promised aid and failure to implement the Paris Agreement. Possibly the North Vietnamese were laying the ground work for claiming that they were no longer bound by the Paris Agreement, since the Americans had failed to keep their end of the bargain. Additionally, the call was made for the overthrow of South Vietnam's President Thieu, an ominous development since that directly contravened the DRV's long-standing concession of South Vietnamese autonomy.[158]

With the Communist winter/spring offensive underway, the issue of aid became a moot point. A full scale war was

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[157]History of the Vietnam War on Microfilm. "UPI Press Release, December 4, 1974." Berkeley: University of California, Indochina Archives.

[158]Washington Post. December 25, 1974.

beginning, though neither side was aware of it at the time. Although military action of this magnitude clearly violated the Paris Agreement, Hanoi didn't expect the rapid collapse of the South that year. Indeed they were only maneuvering for better positions for their intended major offensive in 1976.[159]

After the relatively easy first victory at Phuoc Long, Hanoi decided to try for a larger target: the provincial capital of Ban Me Thuot in the central highlands. This city also fell quickly and the rout was underway. The Politburo quickly decided to exploit this surprising weakness, sweeping south with fifteen divisions and conquering Saigon on April 30, 1975. An era was over.[160]

Ambassador Habib commented that the Communists:

> . . .tested our credibility (to reintervene as the U.S. had promised) with a couple of jabs later in 1974 and discovered that we did nothing and that militarily they could do any thing they wished. So they decided to go for broke in 1975. And that was that."[161]

In short, the United States' commitment to support South Vietnam weakened following the signing of the Paris Peace Agreement because its people were tired from years of warfare and resultant domestic turmoil. Funding became a growing

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[159]Karnow, 650-670.

[160]Engelmann, 4.

[161]Ibid., 4.

problem, the whole mood of Congress changed, and tensions between South Vietnam and the United States grew as Communist ceasefire violations escalated. By the time of the Communist offensive in the winter of 1974, and with the Watergate scandal unfolding, any hope of U.S. reintervention into the war was gone and South Vietnam was lost.

While the official U.S. position has been consistent since the fall of South Vietnam--that Communists actions nullified the Paris Agreement, so no aid issue exists--the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (the new name for the unified country) felt the U.S. still owed them an aid package. In 1978, the Carter administration sent a delegation to Hanoi to research POW/MIA issues and to explore the possibilities of bilateral diplomatic relations. The Communist response amounted to the demand "give us our money or we won't discuss normalization with the U.S." The U.S. delegation promptly left.[162]

The following year Hanoi changed its tune, but the window of opportunity had passed. The U.S.-Chinese (PRC) relationship had dramatically improved and the Vietnamese-Chinese relationship had continued to deteriorate, largely due to conflict over Cambodia (where the Chinese backed the Khmer Rouge). The Vietnamese finally invaded Cambodia leading to a

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[162]U.S. Department of State. "United States of America, Current Treaties." 1992.

punitive attack on Vietnam by China in 1979. These events led the U.S. to abandon efforts to reestablish relations with Vietnam.

With the withdrawal of Vietnamese forces from Cambodia in recent years, talks between the U.S. and Vietnam have resumed. Today the aid issue is probably being discussed again as the U.S. and the SRV work on resolving the long-standing MIA issue, among others. In late 1992, diplomatic recognition looks possible, though it is unlikely before 1993.[163]

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[163]Jim Mann, "U.S. Prepares for Ties to Vietnam." Los Angeles Times. October 22, 1992. p. A1 and A12.

CONCLUSION

United States Presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon failed in their attempts to use the "carrot-and-stick" (reward and punishment) strategy to force Communist Vietnamese leaders into abandoning their efforts to reunify Vietnam. Both presidents made repeated attempts to offer an acceptable amount of aid, combined with a lethal dose of combat escalation, in hopes of breaking the Communists will to win.

Although the Americans and their allies inflicted enormous casualties upon the Communist forces (both North Vietnamese regulars and Viet Cong guerrillas), the Commmunists were prepared to sacrifice far more soldiers to accomplish their goals than estimated by U.S. planners. Further, allied bomb damage to North Vietnam, and to its supply and transportation systems in the South, never reached a level that exceeded the aid to replace these losses received from the Soviets and Communist Chinese.

President Nixon's Vietnamization Program failed because the South Vietnamese had the material, but not the leadership or will to resist the North by themselves. Nixon's aid promises to the North were never fulfilled because of the Communist decision to persist in territorial acquisitions during the War of the Flags and their decision to invade the South during the winter 1974/spring 1975 campaign.

Both Johnson and Nixon were motivated by an array of agendas, circumstances and goals, but failed in the long run because they never really understood their enemy. By underestimating the Communist Vietnamese, and overestimating the South Vietnamese, they left a legacy of failure to future generations.

Presidents Johnson and Nixon and their principle advisors enacted policies which indicated they viewed the Vietnamese as possessing American attitudes and weaknesses. Further, these American leaders didn't seem to understand that the enemy continued to focus on victory--even during the Paris negotiations.

This failure of American leaders to perceive Asian realities led to an aid program symptomatic of the unreality of the entire U.S. venture in Vietnam. The U.S. backed the creation of an artificial "democratic" South Vietnam, that didn't last, envisioned a fighting ally who couldn't fight alone, and promised aid to both North and South which was never delivered. Once the rout was on in 1975, all sides knew the Americans weren't coming back--Watergate thus sealed South Vietnam's fate.

Johnson and Nixon (and their predecessors) backed an illusion, and in the end the only realities were the dreams, hopes, heroism and failures of the participants--the lives lost and fortunes squandered.

After 47 years of turmoil, the United States stands in late 1992 on the verge of reestablishing diplomatic relations with Vietnam. How much different would these years have been had Truman supported a leftist Vietnamese government under Ho Chi Minh? After 47 years, the U.S. and Vietnam have come full circle.

APPENDIX A

THE SECRET NIXON LETTER

Text of the letter from President Richard Nixon to Prime Minister Pham Van Dong, February 1, 1973*

The President wishes to inform the Democratic Republic of Vietnam of the principles which will govern United States participation in the postwar reconstruction of North Vietnam. As indicated in Article 21 of the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam signed in Paris on January 27, 1973, the United States undertakes this participation in accordance with its traditional policies. These principles are as follows:

1. The Government of the United States of America will contribute to postwar reconstruction in North Vietnam without any political conditions.
2. Preliminary United States studies indicate that the appropriate programs for the United States contribution to postwar reconstruction will fall in the range of $3.25 billion of grant aid over five years. Other forms of aid will be agreed upon between the two parties. This estimate is subject to revision and to detailed discussion between the Government of the United States and the Government of the Democratic Republic [of] Vietnam.
3. The United States will propose to the Democratic Republic of Vietnam the establishment of a United States-North Vietnamese Joint Economic Commission within 30 days from the date of this message.
4. The function of the commission will be to develop programs for the United States contribution to reconstruction of North Vietnam. This United States contribution will be based upon such factors as:
   (a) The needs of North Vietnam arising from the dislocation of war;
   (b) The requirements for postwar reconstruction in the agricultural and industrial sectors of North Vietnam's economy.
5. The Joint Economic Commission will have an equal number of representatives from each side. It will agree upon a mechanism to administer the program which will constitute the United States contribution to the reconstruction of North Vietnam. The commission will attempt to complete this agreement within 60 days after its establishment.
6. The two members of the commission will function on the principle of respect for each other's sovereignty,

noninterference in each other's internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit. The offices of the commission will be located at a place to be agreed upon by the United States and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

7. The United States considers that the implementation of the foregoing principles will prompt economic, trade and other relations between the United States of America and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam and will contribute to insuring a stable and lasting peace in Indochina. These principles accord with the spirit of Chapter VIII of the Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam which was signed in Paris on Jan. 27,1973.

Understanding Regarding Economic Reconstruction Program

It is understood that the recommendation of the Joint Economic Commission mentioned in the President's note to the Prime Minister will be implemented by each member in accordance with its own constitutional provisions.

Note Regarding Other Forms of Aid

In regard to other forms of aid, United States studies indicate that the appropriate programs could fall in the range of $1 billion to $1.5 billion depending on food and other commodity needs of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

*Sources: H. Bruce Franklin. MIA or Mythmaking in America. (Brooklyn, New York: Lawrence Hill books. 1992). p. 183. Reprinted from The New York Times, May 20, 1977. Declassified by U.S. State Department.

APPENDIX B

TESTIMONY BY UNDERSECRETARY OF STATE PHILIP HABIB TO THE HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON MISSING PERSONS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, JULY 21, 1976*

MR. [Benjamin] GILMAN. With regard to that high price, when we were in Hanoi there were references made to some agreements made between our Government and Vietnam with regard to postwar reparations. Can you set forth for us just where we stand with regard to those negotiations? Were there any agreements we are now aware of, secret memorandum that this committee is not aware of?

MR. HABIB. There is no agreement or secret memorandum which this committee is not aware of in this respect . . .

MR. [Paul] MCCLOSKEY. With all due respect, Mr. Secretary, this committee asked the Secretary of State and you the same question before we went to Hanoi last December. You did not advise us of that secret letter and we discovered its existence only when we got to Hanoi. Can you tell this committee now why we went to Hanoi without being advised of the existence of that letter which was known to the Secretary of State, especially after we asked you about it?

MR. HABIB. I don't recall that we were - were we asked specifically about the letter before you went?

MR. MCCLOSKEY. We didn't have any idea the letter existed. We asked you in November if there were any secret agreements that we should know about before we went to Hanoi and we were not advised by you or the Secretary of State of the letter's existence or of the $3.25 billion figure which we later ascertained.

MR. HABIB. This is not an agreement . . . There is no agreement, there was no agreement, there never was an agreement as far as I know, and I think I would know at this

stage. We have researched it and there is no agreement with respect to the question of aid involved in that letter. That letter was simply a letter designed to set up a Joint Economic Commission pursuant to article 21 of the Paris agreement. The truth of the matter is there was no agreement.

*Sources: H. Bruce Franklin. M.I.A. or Mythmaking in America. Brooklyn, New York: Lawrence Hill Books. 1992. United States House of Representatives Select Committee on Missing Persons in Southeast Asia. Americans Missing in Southeast Asia. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office. December 13, 1976.

APPENDIX C

W. W. ROSTOW MEMORANDUM TO PRESIDENT NIXON

DECLASSIFIED AUGUST 27, 1986

PHOTOCOPIES ATTACHED

~~TOP SECRET~~ -- EYES ONLY

Thursday, November 17, 1966 -- 1:30 p. m.

Mr. President:

This memorandum suggests that the optimum form of negotiation with Hanoi may be:

-- a secret negotiation of a total deal;

-- a dramatic joint announcement followed by a complete end of hostilities, infiltration, and the beginning of troop withdrawals.

I. A Possible Problem

It is certain that the men in Hanoi have not yet decided that their best option is to negotiate. And there is still a probability that they believe that the burden of the war on the U.S. will give them a better resolution in the future than they could get at present, although that conviction may be waning.

But there may be another problem. They may be willing to accept the outcome we have outlined; but they may not be able to see how they can get from here to there without a complete collapse in their negotiating position along the way. Therefore, they may think a different outcome than the one we promise would result. That is why they may, with some candor, call our proposals "trickery" -- or worse.

Their problem is this: If they stop infiltration and if they stop terror in the South, two things are likely to happen:

-- the Viet Cong movement will quickly collapse;

-- they will then lose their international bargaining position.

This is because the Viet Cong are so dependent on northern supplies, men, and leadership and because the ability to disrupt and to terrorize is the only serious bargaining leverage they have -- or believe they have.

Once the Viet Cong movement collapses, it is almost impossible to envisage its starting up again. For example, they may well feel that any substantial de-escalation by Hanoi -- in infiltrated men, supplies, etc. -- would be immediately recognized by the Viet Cong as the beginning of the end.

The Viet Cong might scramble for their place in the society of South Viet Nam. On the other hand, we could sustain various degrees of de-escalation without a collapse in our position or that of South Viet Nam.

With a patent collapse in the Viet Cong they may feel Saigon and we could claim a "new situation" and ignore prior commitments. Communists, as a matter of doctrine, are trained to rely on effective power, not verbal promises or good will.

In this context we should remember that, quite contrary to a popular cliche in the West, guerrilla wars have been won or lost clean: mainland China; Malaya; Philippines; Greece. The only compromise solutions were not political but territorial; e.g., the split of Indo-China at the 17th parallel. (I do not count the Laos solution because it is not a solution -- the war continues, awaiting the outcome in Viet Nam.) We are, thus, up against a tough problem in trying to talk our way to a satisfactory resolution of a guerrilla war -- with no clear precedents.

2. A Possible Solution

If I have correctly described a part of Hanoi's problem in ending the war by negotiation, the answer may lie in communicating to them a solution which takes that problem into account and making it credible.

Specifically, we must communicate three things:

-- an end position which Hanoi and the Viet Cong could live with;

-- a way of making our guarantee of that position credible;

-- a way of getting there which would minimize the significance of Hanoi's and Viet Cong's weak bargaining leverage along the way.

Now each element in turn.

3. An End Position

We can offer the Viet Cong only two things in South Viet Nam and the substance of one of them is dependent on how soon they move towards peace:

-- a guarantee against slaughter, as in Indonesia.

-- a right to organize politically and to vote, but only after arms are laid down. They cannot mix terror and political status.

The meaning of the second offer is contingent on when it is picked up; for example, they have already missed the constitutional assembly; if they want to get in on the next round of village and provincial elections, they had better move fast (before early 1967), and this could prove important in establishing a local political base for them; if they want to influence the presidential elections under the new constitution, they have only between now and September 1967.

Since they know that their prospects on a one-man-one-vote basis are not good in South Viet Nam, the Viet Cong may not find a role in domestic politics worth much; it may be more important to Hanoi which could be concerned to save some face for their proteges and protect them from the reprisals that could come if they persist in violence once the game from the North is called off.

As for Hanoi, we can only offer them our withdrawal six months after they are out and violence subsides, plus a free Viet Cong run at peaceful politics plus the promise of an ultimate plebiscite on unity under peaceful conditions plus economic assistance in reconstruction as part of Southeast Asia if they want it.

/It may, incidentally, be important to communicate to them soon that we do not intend to let the war drag; that we plan to up the ante; and our present offers to them may not hold indefinitely./

4. The Problem of Credibility

The credibility problem can only be fully solved in conjunction with the bargaining leverage problem discussed in Section 5 below. But two things could contribute:

-- negotiating in secret the end position while the war goes on;

-- announcing it publicly (and perhaps registering it before the UN) as the process described in Section 5 begins.

Specifically, the U.S. and the fighting allies would join the government of South Viet Nam in guaranteeing the amnesty to the Viet Cong. If the

Viet Cong wanted promptly to participate in peaceful elections -- for example at the local level -- we (and the government in Saigon) would accept international supervision. If asked what our sanctions would be in the case of violation of the amnesty, we could point out that the South Vietnamese would remain for a long time extremely dependent on our assistance and on the political support of the rest of the world. But no guarantee to the Viet Cong as an organization could be secure unless they cut out violence and did not revive it.

5. The Bargaining Leverage Problem

There is only one answer to the Communist bargaining problem: speed. Once the end position is negotiated in secret and announced, then the war -- North and South, main force and guerrilla -- must stop dramatically: the North Viet Nam units must immediately begin heading home (from Laos, too); and we must begin immediately some withdrawals. All infiltration and supply movements south must stop on a given day -- 100%.

The drama of the joint announcement of the agreement by ourselves, Hanoi, Saigon, and the NLF is the best facesaver they could have, with symmetrical movements promptly following.

Then a Geneva conference could take place on the details of the international aspects of the deal -- a beefed up control commission; straightening out Laos, etc.

6. How to Probe the Viability of this Concept

The probe should be a direct U.S.-Hanoi gambit, with no intermediaries.

It should be conducted in great secrecy, and evident seriousness, by a completely credible U.S. official. He should leave behind an aide memoire for communication to Hanoi.

W. W. Rostow

WWRostow:rln

APPENDIX D

JOINT ECONOMIC COMMISSION REPORT OF RECONSTRUCTION AID

PRESENTED TO HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE

PHOTOCOPIES ATTACHED FROM HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE REPORT

AMERICANS MISSING IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

APPENDIX I

The following list was provided to the Select Committee in Hanoi in December 1975. The list was described by the Vietnamese as the Joint Economic Commission report, comprised of a 1-year and a 5-year plan for reconstruction aid for the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

First Year Program For Reconstruction and Healing the Wounds of War

Shelter and maintenance of living conditions

—Prefabricated housing, including sanitary porcelain, 150,000–200,000 square meters.
—Prefabricated ware houses, 500,000 square meters.
—Corrugated galvanized steel sheets, 20,000 metric tons.
—Timber, 400,000 cubic meters.
—Plywood, 50,000 cubic meters.
—Steel-building, shaped and plate, 200,000 metric tons.
—Rayon and stable fibers, 2,000 metric tons.
—Cloth, 40 million meters.
—Pharmaceutical raw materials, $2 million.
—Working tools, $3 million.

Agriculture

—Crawler tractors: 100 HP, 500 ea.; 75 HP, 500 ea.
—Wheel tractors: 50 HP, 500 ea.; 20 HP, 500 ea.
—Bulldozers: 140 HP, 250–500 ea.; 75 HP, 200 ea.
—Scrapers, 100 HP, 100 ea.
—Excavators, 0.3–0.65 cubic meter, 100 ea.
—Implements for tractors:
  Clearing rackers for 100 HP crawler tractors, 100 ea.
  Rock buckets for 100 HP crawler tractors, 100 ea.
  Stacker buckets for 75 HP crawler tractors, 100 ea.
  Rippers for 100 HP crawler tractors, 100 ea.
  Gravel buckets for 50 HP wheel tractors, 100 ea.
  Ploughs, harrows, cultivators, and canal diggers for tractors.
—Repair plants for tractors, three (3).
—Mobile repair vans, 50 ea.
—Equipment for irrigation construction teams, 3 teams.
—Suction dredgers, 250 cubic meters per hour, 10 ea.
—Fertilizer: Urea, 200,000 metric tons, potash, 100,000 metric tons.
—Tinplate, 10,000 metric tons.
—Yarn, Polyamid for fishnets, 1,000 metric tons.
—Fishing vessels, 20,000 HP.

GENERAL RECONSTRUCTION

Infrastructure

—Port, floating, capacity 2 million metric tons per year.
—Crane, floating, capacity 300 metric tons.
—Cranes, port, 2 ea. with capacity 10 to 15 metric tons.
—Equipment, port construction teams, 2 teams.
—Dredgers, suction, 2 ea., capacity 2,500 cubic meters per hour.
—Dredgers, suction, 5 ea., capacity 500 cubic meters per hour.
—Piles, steel—steel tube, 20,000 metric tons.
—Barges, capacity 600 metric tons, total capacity 50,000–100,000 metric tons.
—Tugs, 25–50 ea., 860 HP type.
—Excavators, 5 ea., capacity over 4 cubic meters.
—Trucks, 20 ea., capacity 25 tons.
—Trucks (dump), 500 ea., 5–6 ton capacity.
—Trucks, 50 ea., 10–15 ton capacity.
—Trucks, refrigerator, 50 ea., 5–10 ton capacity.
—Equipment, roadbuilding teams, 10 teams.
—Flange girders, bridge, 10,000 metric tons.
—Locomotives, diesel, 10 ea., 2,000–3,000 HP.
—Freight cars, 250–500 ea.
—Equipment, railroad construction teams, 2 teams.
—Cranes, truck, 100 ea., 6–15–25 ton capacity.
—Rail, complete with steel sleepers, 10,000 metric tons.
—Pile hammers, diesel, 10 ea., 6–15 ton ram weight.
—Drills, one with capacity to drill to 5,000 meters.
—Machines, apparatus or equipment, including electrical manufacturing equipment for industry, research and experimental use, $20 million.
—Cargo vessels, 50,000 tons.

Raw materials

—Chemicals, industrial, $10 million.
—Rubber, synthetic, 15,000 metric tons.
—Caustic soda, 10,000 metric tons.
—Steel, machine, 10,000 metric tons.
—Steel, alloy, 5,000 metric tons.
—Copper, 2,500 metric tons.
—Aluminum, 20,000 metric tons.
—Cable, telephone, 500km.
—Paper, 10,000 metric tons.
—Canvas, 3 million meters.
—Cable, copper, high tension, 3,000 metric tons.
—Coal, coking, 50,000 metric tons.
—Tire cord and fabric, 1 million meters.

Feasibility and Engineering Studies, $10 million

GENERAL RECONSTRUCTION

—An amount of approximately 15 percent of the United States total contribution (attributed to local costs incurred by the Democratic

Republic of Viet-Nam in the use of U.S. contributed commodities and equipment for reconstruction) will be used by the DRVN for the procurement of goods and services from third countries.

LIST OF COMMODITIES IN THE PROGRAM FOR THE USE OF THE UNITED STATES CONTRIBUTION UNDER NON-REPAYABLE FORM FOR THE FIVE YEAR PERIOD 1973–1978

A. FOOD, FOOD PROCESSING AND AGRICULTURE

—Food processing plants for livestock. Five, output per unit—10 tons per day.
—Nitrogenous fertilizer plant, output 1,000 tons NH^3 per day.
—Crawler tractors: 100 HP, 8,000 ea.; 75 HP, 5,000 ea.
—Wheel tractors: 50 HP, 5,000 ea.; 20 HP, 2,000 ea.
—Bulldozers: 140 HP, 1,000 ea.; 75 HP, 800 ea.
—Scrapers, 100 HP, 200 ea.
—Excavators, 0.3–0.65 cubic meter, 500 ea.
—Implements for tractors:
Clearing rackers for 100 HP crawler tractors, 500 ea.
Rock buckets for 100 HP crawler tractors, 500 ea.
Stacker buckets for 75 HP crawler tractors, 800 ea.
Rippers for 100 HP crawler tractors, 800 ea.
Gravel buckets for 50 HP wheel tractors, 500 ea.
Ploughs, harrows, cultivators, and canal diggers for tractors.
—Repair plants for tractors, fifteen (15).
—Mobile repair vans, 100 ea.
—Equipment for irrigation construction teams, 10 teams.
—Suction dredgers, 250 cubic meters per hour, 20 ea.
—Equipment for three agricultural colleges and six agricultural research institutes.
—Fertilizer: Urea, 750,000 metric tons; potash, 250,000 metric tons.
—Tinplate, 50,000 metric tons.
—Metal wrapping paper plant, annual capacity 3,000 metric tons.
—Fishing vessels, totaling 100,000 HP.
—Refrigerator ships, five of approximately 2,500 tons.
—Yarn, polyamid for fishnets, 5,000 metric tons.

B. SHELTER AND BUILDING CONSTRUCTION

—Prefabricated housing, including sanitary porcelain, 700,000 square meters.
—Prefabricated warehouses, 800,000 square meters.
—Corrugated galvanized steel sheets, 50,000 metric tons.
—Timber, 1,000,000 cubic meters.
—Plywood, 100,000 cubic meters.
—Steel-building, shaped and plate, 1,500,000 metric tons.
—Prefabricated housing plants, Four with annual output 1,000 apartments each.
—Plumbing fixtures and accessories plant, annual output 5,000 metric tons.
—Sanitary porcelain wares plant, annual output 5,000 metric tons.
—Cement plants, two with annual output per plant 1.2 million metric tons.

—Sheet glass plant, annual output 10 million square meters.
—Chipboard plants, five, annual output per plant 20,000 cubic meters, including glue manufacturing facilities.
—Synthetic paint plant, annual output 10,000 metric tons.
—Leatherette plant, annual output 5 million square meters.
—Working tools, $10 million.

C. CLOTHING: YARNS, CLOTH AND LEATHER

—Rayon and stable fibers, 10,000 metric tons.
—Polyamid yarn, 1,000 metric tons.
—Cloth, 100 million meters.
—Textile mill, annual output 30,000 tons of yarn and 100 million meters of cloth.
—Knitwear factory, annual output 3,000 metric tons.
—Leather, 2 million square feet.
—Canvas, 5 million meters.

D. GENERAL RECONSTRUCTION

—An amount of approximately fifteen percent of the United States total contribution (attributed to local costs incurred by the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam in the use of United States contributed commodities and equipment for reconstruction) will be used by the DRVN for the procurement of goods and services from third countries.

E. ENERGY

—Thermal power station, 1,200 MW capacity complete with substations and 400 km of transmission line.
—High tension electrical equipment plant, annual output 3,000 metric tons.
—Oil storage, 150,000 cubic meters.
—Drills, two with capacity to drill over 5,000 meters deep.
—Cable, copper, high tension, 10,000 metric tons.

F. PORT RECONSTRUCTION AND WATER TRANSPORT

—Floating dock, repair, of over 10,000 ton capacity.
—Port, floating, capacity 1 million metric tons per year.
—Port, floating, capacity 2 million metric tons per year.
—Crane, floating, capacity 300 metric tons.
—Cranes, port, 15 ea. with capacity 10 to 15 metric tons.
—Equipment, port construction teams, 6 teams.
—Dredgers, suction, 4 ea., capacity 2,500 cubic meters per hour.
—Dredgers, suction, 10 ea., capacity 500 cubic meters per hour.
—Piles, steel—steel tube, 50,000 metric tons.
—Barges, capacity 600 metric tons, total capacity 150,000 metric tons.
—Tugs, 100 ea., 360 HP type.
—Vessels, ocean-going, total capacity 400,000 metric tons.

G. ROAD AND RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Roads

—Excavators, 15 ea., capacity 4 cubic meters upwards.
—Trucks, 100 ea., capacity 25 tons.

—Trucks, dump, 5,000 ea., 5–6 ton capacity.
—Trucks, 250 ea., 10–15 ton capacity.
—Trucks, refrigerator, 100 ea., 5–10 ton capacity.
—Equipment, roadbuilding teams, 80 teams.
—Flange girders, bridge, 60–160 meters long, 20,000 metric tons.

Rail

—Locomotives, diesel, 50 ea., 2,000–3,000 HP.
—Freight cars, 1,000 ea.
—Freight cars, specialized—refrigerator, 50 ea., cement carriers, 20 ea., multi-axle, 10 ea.
—Equipment, railroad construction teams, 5 teams.
—Equipment, tunnel construction teams, 2 teams.
—Cranes, truck, 500 ea., 6–15–25 ton capacity.
—Rail, complete with steel sleepers, 70,000 metric tons.
—Girders, bridge, 1,500 meters, including girders of over 160 meters long each and other steel bridge parts.
—Pile hammers, diesel, 20 ea., 6–15 ton ram weight.

H. INDUSTRIAL COMMODITIES AND EQUIPMENT

—Chemicals, industrial, $50 million.
—Rubber, synthetic, 50,000 metric tons.
—Caustic soda, 50,000 metric tons.
—Steel, machine, 60,000 metric tons.
—Steel, alloy 30,000 metric tons.
—Copper, 10,000 metric tons.
—Aluminum, 60,000 metric tons.
—Cable, telephone, 1,000 km.
—Paper, 50,000 metric tons.
—Pharmaceutical raw materials, $10 million.
—Machines, apparatus or equipment, including electrical manufacturing equipment for industry, research and experimental use, $100 million.
—Steel mill, annual output 1 million tons.
—Coal, coking, 1.5 million metric tons.
—Tire cord and fabric, 5 million meters.

I. FEASIBILITY AND ENGINEERING STUDIES AND PURCHASE OF INDUSTRIAL PROCESS LICENSES AND KNOW-HOW.

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